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

Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON
UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS
FOR THE
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1968

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P R E F A C E

The purpose of the lessons contained in this *Annual Lesson Commentary* is not to displace the Bible, but rather to aid one in a better understanding of that which we have from the pen of inspired men. No one should ever be afraid to let the Bible speak for itself. When men were authorized by God to write the Bible, it was necessary for them to speak to the people of their day in language which they could understand; and it was also necessary for them to record eternal truths in language which would never be out of date, and which would serve to instruct the people of all ages to come. This is exactly the kind of information we have in the Sacred Scriptures.

If one will make a practice of reading the Bible for the sole purpose of discovering the truths which it contains, he will certainly come to see, as the children of Israel did when they gathered the manna in the wilderness, that it is fresh every morning. The Bible will never grow old to those who want to do the will of our heavenly Father; and it is for this reason that we should employ every legitimate means to enable us to learn as much about it as possible. One of the great Bible teachers of the comparatively recent past, J. W. McGarvey, said, "The man who attempts to gain a knowledge of the Bible by his own unaided powers, while the aid furnished by a multitude of learned and devout predecessors is at hand, seems to declare himself the equal in exegetical power of all who have gone before him. In no other department of human study do we reject the aid of our fellow students; why should we reject it in this?"

The author of this volume has endeavored to collect, and to bring into convenient compass, some of the best ideas which are available, in addition to his own comments, so that the student of the Word may have, at close range, a commentary on the lesson which he is considering. And it is gratifying to know that thousands of people are using this annual every week. The following words from Charles H. Spurgeon seem to be appropriate just here, namely, "As we pour a little water down a pump to help it to draw up a stream from below, so may these sermon notes refresh many a jaded mind, and then set it to working so as to develop its own resources."

This is the forty-seventh annual volume which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by churches of Christ; and it is the twenty-third volume 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 shall make use of it throughout the year.

THE AUTHOR

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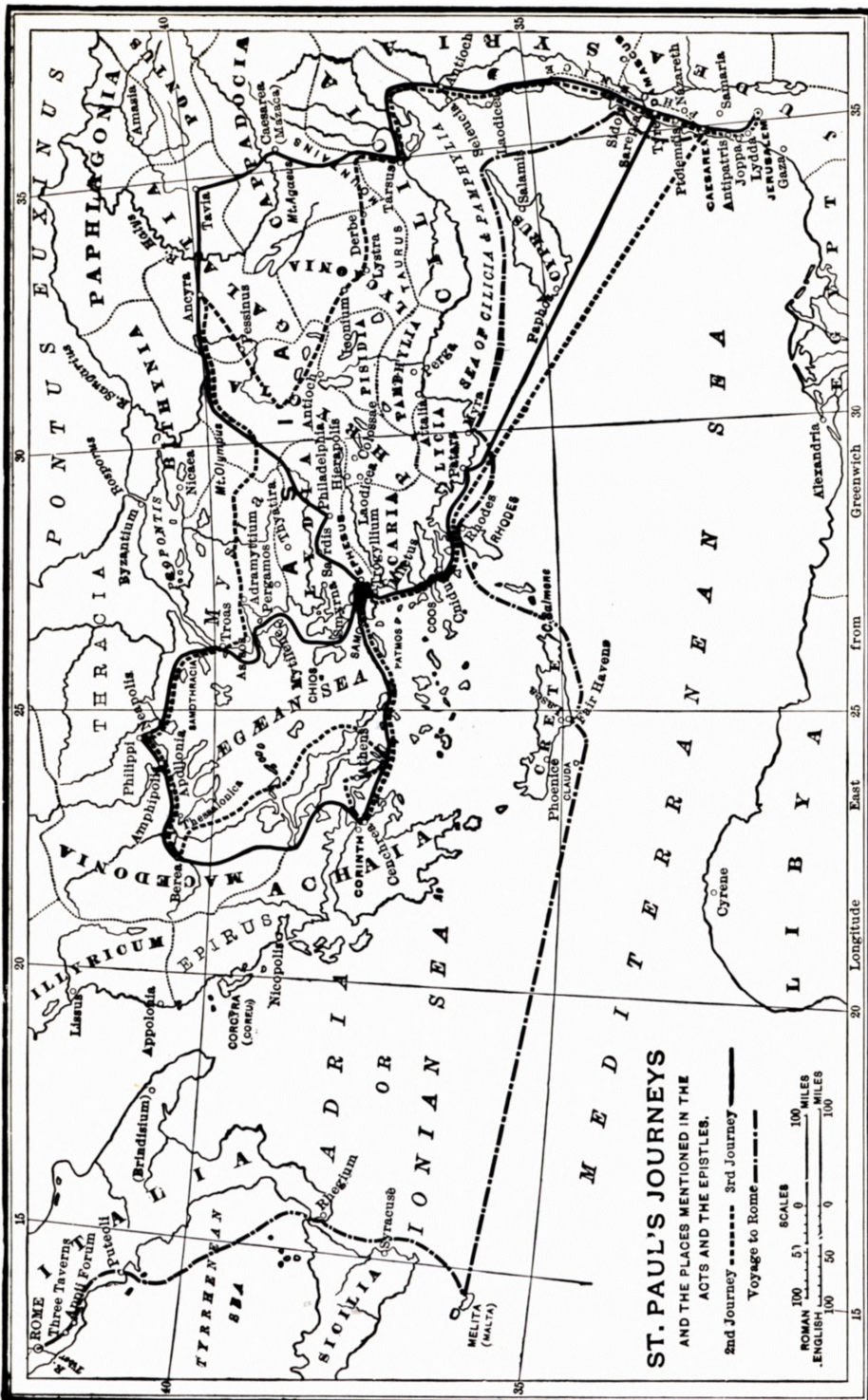
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FIRST QUARTER

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

AIM.—To study, in detail, Paul's profound letter to the church in Rome, and to note particularly his thesis that justification is through faith in Christ, and not by means of the works of the law of Moses.

Lesson I—January 7, 1968

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

Lesson Text

Rom. 1: 1-13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8 First, I thank my God through Je'-sus Christ for you all, that your

faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish."* (Rom. 1: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 28: 17-24.

Daily Bible Readings

January 1. M.....	Why Paul Was in Rome (Acts 25: 1-10)
January 2. T.....	Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25: 11-22)
January 3. W.....	Trip to Rome (Acts 28: 11-16)
January 4. T.....	Experiences in Rome (Acts 28: 19-22)
January 5. F.....	Associates in Rome (Acts 18: 1-4)
January 6. S.....	Paul's Concern for the Romans (Rom. 16: 8-16)
January 7. S.....	Prayers for Paul (Rom. 15: 30-33)

TIME.—Romans was written in A.D. 58.

PLACE.—The letter was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

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

daism; and the four epistles which we are to study during this and the last two quarters of this year tell us

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

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, his work in the eastern world had been practically finished. (Rom. 15: 19-23.) He had been preaching the gospel in Asia Minor and Greece for approximately twenty-five years. His work began in Syria and Cilicia, and then reached out to include labors in Cyprus, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and finally in Asia, which the Romans called the western-most province of Asia Minor. It is possible that Paul would have gone to Rome when he finished his work in the eastern part

of the Roman Empire, had it not been for his commitment regarding the collection for the Jerusalem saints. (1 Cor. 16: 1-4; Rom. 15: 23-32.) But being compelled by this great benevolent undertaking to defer for the time being his proposed visit to Rome and Spain, Paul did the next best thing: he sent a long epistle to the brethren in the Imperial City.

Paul's letter to the Roman brethren is at once the least personal and the most elaborate of all of his writings which have come down to us. Perhaps his message should be called a treatise rather than a letter. But regardless of the subject in hand, Paul was always vividly personal, and was ever conscious of the people to whom he was writing, that is, he wanted them to understand his message to them. The Judaizing tendencies which had recently appeared in Corinth and Galatia were certain, eventually, to appear in other churches, perhaps ultimately in all; and the attitude assumed by a church already so influential, and which was destined to increase in power, as the church in Rome was, would be certain to carry great weight in deciding the controversy. Therefore, to set the church in Rome right regarding the design and nature of the gospel was a work of supreme importance; and a letter from the apostle to the church in the Capital City on the question of the hour would be read with interest and profit. Such, in brief, was the background against which Paul wrote the epistle, the study of which we are now beginning.

The Golden Text

"I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." Paul's remark about his obligation toward all men of every race and condition opens up to us in some measure the secret of his tireless missionary zeal. His own salvation from eternal destruction and his commission to preach the gospel made him a debtor to all men. "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted

to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel. For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are

without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof." (1 Cor. 9: 16-23.)

Notwithstanding the fact that Paul had suffered many things of the peoples of his day, he still felt himself under a deep obligation to all of them; and it was this feeling which "explains the tireless energy, the unbounded devotion, the unquenchable ardour which drove him from one land and city to another, preaching to all and sundry the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' And when we have penetrated behind the outer form and husk of this saying to its inner meaning we shall find not only the key to the life of Paul, the missionary, but the master-motive of all true missionary ef-

fort in every age and land." (*The Speaker's Bible—Romans*, Vol. I, p. 25.)

The Greeks were the "cultured" people of Paul's day, while the Barbarians were foreigners, or those who did not speak the Greek language; and, so far as the Jews were concerned, "Greeks and Barbarians" included all who were not of the favored family of Abraham, through Isaac and Jacob. But regardless of their race, state, or condition, Paul felt that he was under obligation to preach the gospel to them; and that was what he wanted the brethren in Rome to understand. That, however, was entirely unacceptable to the Judaizers who so bitterly opposed Paul; but his aim was to please God and save souls, and not be turned aside from the right course by the zealous, but misguided, men of his own race.

The Text Explained

The Salutation

(Rom. 1: 1-7)

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the longest salutation found in any of the epistles; and, as one may see by reading it, it is expressed in a single sentence. (Compare the salutations of Titus and Galatians for those nearest to Romans in point of length.) In the salutation now before us we have (1) a description of the writer, (2) a word about his gospel and apostleship, (3) something concerning the readers; and (4) the greeting. The expansion of the salutation was

natural, since he was addressing a most important document to a church with whom he was not personally acquainted.

The three things Paul said about himself are (1) he was a servant of Jesus Christ, (2) he was called to be an apostle, and (3) he was separated unto the gospel of God. The marginal reading for "servant" is bondservant, which ordinarily signifies a slave; but James Macknight points out that "here it is a name of honor; for in the East the chief ministers of kings were called *douloi* (slaves). . . . This honorable name, therefore, denotes the high authority which Paul possessed in the kingdom of Christ, as one of his chief ministers." In further describing his relation to Christ, he informed the Roman brethren that he was "a called apostle," a *klētos* apostle, which, so far as the New Testament meaning of the word is concerned, always denotes that God did the calling. (Cf. Rom. 5: 28; Jude 1.) His "separation," that is, his being set apart or appointed as a gospel preacher, was also an act of God. (Cf. Gal. 1: 15.) All of this meant that he was speaking for God when he addressed his message to the Romans.

Paul then went on to show that the gospel which he preached was the result of the promise which God

had made through the Old Testament prophets (Luke 24: 44-46; 1 Cor. 15: 1-4), and that its subject is his own Son, who was both human and divine. His genealogy showed him to be the son of David, while his resurrection from the dead declared him to be God's Son; for if he had not been God's Son, as he claimed to be, God would not have raised him from the dead. And it was from this Son, that Paul received his commission—grace and apostleship—to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and it was for that reason that his work in that field was not of his own choosing, the Judaizers to the contrary, notwithstanding. (Compare Gal. 2: 7-9; 1 Cor. 15: 10; Eph. 3: 7, 8.)

Paul is the most exhaustive writer of the New Testament on the subject of justification by faith; and his most elaborate treatise on that question is found in the letter we are now studying. In view of the emphasis he placed on the subject, and the clarity with which he dealt with the issue, it is interesting to observe that he opened and closed the epistle with the expression "obedience of faith." (Rom. 1: 5: 16:

26.) The marginal reading in both of these instances is obedience "to the faith." The rendering in the Revised Standard Version is "to bring about obedience to the faith," while the New English Bible has "to lead to faith and obedience." This teaching, of course, makes impossible the idea of salvation by faith only. "Faith" and "obedience of faith" are not the same. The *obedience of faith* is the obedience which results from faith, or which faith produces. The gospel, according to Paul, was made known for this very purpose. (Compare 2 Thess. 1: 8; 1 Pet. 4: 17.) Paul made it plain to the Roman brethren that they were among the number of Gentiles who were the "called" (*klētoi*) of Jesus Christ.

Some Preliminary Explanations

(Rom. 1: 8-12)

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how increasingly I make mention of you, always

in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

Before beginning the discussion of the great theme of justification by faith, in contrast with the meritorious works of the law, Paul wanted to bring about an intimate relationship with the Roman brethren; and he sought to do just that by some personal explanations, the first of which was his thankfulness for what they were in relationship to Jesus Christ. They not only accepted Christ as their Saviour, but their faith had grown to the extent that it was proclaimed, that is, made known, throughout the entire world. Few things meant more to the grand old apostle to the Gentiles than a church which exerted such godly influence. His own work with the church in Ephesus had been such "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." (See Acts 19: 8-10; cf. 1 Thess. 1: 2-10.)

Not only is thankfulness the natural manifestation of a thoughtful person; it is indispensable to the best in human relations. The words "thank" and "think" are from the same Anglo-Saxon root, and their spelling differs only in a single letter. Thoughtful people are those who are thankful; and those who are thankful are the thoughtful ones. Paul wanted the brethren in Rome to react favorably to his message to them; and he knew that one of the best ways to that end was to establish a congenial relationship between them. And what could be better than to let them know of his gratitude for their faithfulness? This is a lesson that church leaders, preachers, and all other Christians should learn well and put into practice at all times.

Paul's interest in the Roman brethren had to be made known to them without his personal presence; and it was for that reason that he assured them that God was his witness in this respect. Only God could know the true state of his

heart, which was always in his service; and so, under the most solemn circumstances, he let them know of his interest in them and his desire to visit them. He had, however, long since learned that all of his movements were subject to the will of God. (Acts 16: 6-8; cf. 1 Cor. 4: 19; Rom. 15: 30-32; James 4: 13-17.) Paul's longing to visit the Roman Christians was not motivated simply by a desire to see the Imperial City; his one aim was their mutual benefit, "each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." This should be the attitude and aim of every gospel preacher and every congregation of Christians, when their efforts are united in the service of the Lord.

The apostle wanted to give to these Roman brethren a firmer grasp and fuller possession of Jesus Christ, his love, and power, which would result in the strengthening and a deepening of their whole Christian life. He felt that he could do this and would joyfully impart it if they would listen to what he had to tell them. At the same time he was conscious of the limitations of his power in the matter. The word 'gift' which he uses here is never used in the New Testament for a thing that one man can give to another, but is always used for the concrete results of the grace of God bestowed upon men. Paul's expression then, shows that he did not think of himself as the original giver, but simply as a channel through which was communicated what God had given.

Milton wrote that in his day the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. But the sheep have to look up and there has to be a spiritual hunger. This Paul recognized and wanted to prepare the people for. Even Jesus himself was once made helpless through man's unbelief. He knew the hampering and restrictions of his power which came from being surrounded by a chill, unsympathetic environment.

Paul mentions as an instance of his love for the Roman brethren, though they are a famous, flourishing church he prayed for them. They had not yet attained to the heights of which they were capable. One of the greatest kindnesses we can do for a church, for our friends,

and sometimes the only kindness which is possible for us to do, is to recommend them to the loving-kindness of God.

From Paul's example we learn that he observed the same rules that he gave to others, "Pray without ceasing." (Eph. 5: 17.) Paul did other things than pray, but he did keep up stated times for his devotion to God. Though he had no particular acquaintance with these brethren, he mentions them in his secret prayers. God is particularly a witness to our secret prayers, that which we pray for and the manner in which we pray, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." (Matt. 6: 6.) Paul sets forth the way in which the gift of God, by prayer, breaks down the barriers by which we separate ourselves from others. The very essence of Paul's message here is that the progress of the gospel is in its mutual character. Just as when there is a heavy load to be lifted, the two hands co-operate, each supplying what the other lacks, so teacher and people have each their share in a task which God has committed to both.

Paul's Sense of Human Responsibility

(Rom. 1: 13)

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

In speaking of his oft-purposed visit to the Roman brethren, Paul may have been thinking of the reaction of the Corinthians to a similar situation. These latter brethren even went far enough to question the apostle's sincerity regarding the proposed visit. (1 Cor. 16: 5-9; 2 Cor. 1: 15-24.) We do not know, of course, all the things which kept the apostle from going to Rome, but he himself told the brethren that his preaching obligations in the East had been a hindrance "many times" (Rom. 15: 20-23); and he also implied that the journey to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor of that region also stood in the way of

an early trip to their city (Rom. 15: 24-28). Paul did the thing that was most pressing, not that which was most pleasant; for if the latter, perhaps then he would have gone to Rome. He did not consult his own inclinations so much as the necessity of the people's souls. It is very refreshing to Christians to compare notes about their spiritual concerns as Paul did; thus they are awakened and sharpened, as iron sharpens iron.

Paul's preaching was mainly to the Gentiles, and it was his desire to have fruit to offer to God wherever it was possible for him to labor. The edification of the Romans would be to his advantage, it would be fruit abounding to a good account. Paul minded his work as one that believed the more good he did, the greater would be his reward. "But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15: 15, 16.) At another time Paul said: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles,—if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward." (Eph. 3: 1, 2.) The re-

ception of this grace of preaching to the Gentiles implied that it was costly. It was a burden. Paul, as he accepted his responsibility, might have echoed on occasion the words of Moses "Wherefore hast thou dealt ill with thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?" (Num. 11: 11.) Paul didn't say this, but rather he repeatedly expressed the thrill of the early Christians as they saw the majestic purpose of God in their lives. The joy of conversion to Christ was beyond compare.

Paul knew that he carried with him the secret of transforming men's character, this wealth-giving power to the Gentiles, in his preaching of Christ. These virtues that he had been hearing about in the Roman church should become fruits of light, love, meekness, patience, kindness, temperance,—fit for the garden of heaven. There is the idea of ripening in the text. Paul recognizes the fact that there is a difference between good men and women. There is a difference between the same Christian at different times. And the apostle is full of the idea—the Spirit of God—the gospel of Christ—ripening the spirit of men and women and bringing to final perfection all the magnificent possibilities that are wrapped up in the depths of our nature.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What great problem was Paul usually confronted with in his work as a gospel preacher?

Tell something of the apostle's encounter with the Judaizing teachers.

Give the order of the writing of the first four of his epistles which deal with this question.

What was the status of Paul's work in the eastern part of the empire when he wrote Romans?

Why did he postpone his visit in Rome?

Why did he write the letter to the church there?

The Golden Text

What was the secret of Paul's tireless efforts at preaching the gospel?

How could he continue such arduous work amid his many persecutions?

What was the difference between the Greeks and the Barbarians?

Why did Paul feel himself a debtor to those people?

Why did the Judaizers continuously oppose his efforts?

How did the apostle regard their opposition and was he justified in his attitude?

The Salutation

What possible reason did Paul have for writing such a long salutation to the Romans?

What particular points did this salutation contain?

What were the three things which Paul said about himself?

In what sense did he use the term "bond-servant"?

To what was Paul called and who did the calling?

What idea did he expect the Roman brethren to get from all of this?

What was the basis of Paul's gospel and what did it reveal regarding Jesus?

What effect does the "obedience of faith" have on the doctrine of salvation by faith only?

Some Preliminary Explanations

What was Paul's aim in this section of the lesson text?

What important lesson should we learn from his example?

Why did Paul speak of God as his witness?

What does he teach regarding the recognition and acknowledgement of God's will?

Why did the apostle long to visit with the Roman brethren?

How did he regard himself with reference to the blessings he wanted them to have?

What often prevents people from receiving that which the Lord wants them to have?

What kindness can we often manifest toward others?

What place does prayer have in the Christian life?

What mutual responsibility do teachers and people have?

Paul's Sense of Human Responsibility

What are some of the things which may have hindered Paul's visit to Rome?

How did some of the Corinthians feel about his failure to visit them on certain occasions?

What did Paul always take into consideration regarding the Lord's people?

To whom was he mainly charged to preach?

How did he feel toward his ministry?

What secret was he conscious of carrying with him?

What were some of the fruits he longed to cultivate and reap?

Lesson II—January 14, 1968

PAUL'S DESIRE TO PREACH IN ROME

Lesson Text

Rom. 1: 14-25

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

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

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which is known of God is manifested in them; for God manifested it unto them.

20 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:

21 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.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

23 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.

24 Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves:

25 For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. A-men.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

January 8. M.....	The Gospel (1 Cor. 15: 1-3)
January 9. T.....	World-wide Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
January 10. W.....	Paul's Sense of Obligation (Rom. 1: 13-17)
January 11. T.....	Paul's Selflessness in Preaching (1 Cor. 9: 16-23)
January 12. F.....	Trials in Preaching (2 Cor. 11: 23-33)
January 13. S.....	Truth to Be Preached (Gal. 1: 6-12)
January 14. S.....	Joy in Faithful Converts (Phil. 2: 1-3)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, his work in the eastern world had been practically finished. (Rom. 15: 19-23.) The apostle had been preaching the gospel in Asia Minor and Greece for approximately twenty-five years. His work as a gospel preacher began in Syria and Cilicia, and then reached out to include labors in Cyprus, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and finally in Asia, which the Romans called the western-most province of Asia Minor. In most of the provinces just mentioned, Paul had been a pioneer preacher; and he had addressed himself mainly to the Gentiles, or, more specifically, Greeks. His early work had been so planned, and had reached such proportions, as to lead to the expectation that the gospel would, within a relative short time, permeate the whole of the western part of the Roman Empire. (Col. 1: 23.) And with this work, at the time he wrote the letter now under consideration, practically finished, the apostle was already planning to transfer his activities to Spain, where the gospel up to that time had not been preached.

Between Corinth, the place where Paul was when he wrote the Roman letter, and his prospective field in the far west, was situated the city of Rome, the center and metropolis of the empire. The gospel had already found its way to Rome by obscure, but significant, means. We know that "sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes," were present in Jerusalem on the day the church was established. (Acts 2: 10.) It is altogether possible that some of them may have been among the number who were converted on that occasion, or during the time

immediately following; and being devout men (Acts 2: 5), it is not improbable that some of them returned to their homes in Rome with the message of salvation. Furthermore, it is very likely that Jews and Greeks who had been converted in the east had later moved to Rome in search of better business conditions and larger opportunities of the capital city. It would, of course, be but natural for such people to have a part in introducing Christianity in the Imperial City. The zeal of the early church was such that every convert was a missionary, who spread the good news wherever he travelled. (Acts 8: 4.) Paul refers to people in Romans 16: 7, who were then living in Rome, and who were converted to Christianity before he was.

Not only did Paul have many friends in the church in Rome, but he evidently realized the strategic position which it occupied. This meant that the church in the Imperial City exercised an influence which would be of great assistance to the apostle in his continuous struggle with the Judaizers, who were employing every means at their command to undermine the gospel which he was so faithfully preaching. But, which was probably much more important to him, Paul wanted to see to it that the church in Rome was itself fully grounded with reference to the Judaistic conception of the gospel. If that church was loyal in every respect to the teaching of Christ, its influence would go a long way toward stemming the tide of false teaching which had done so much damage in such places as Corinth and Galatia. (Rom. 1: 11, 12.)

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Paul's Motive for Preaching and the Theme of His Message

(Rom. 1: 14-17)

I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is,

I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.

This section of the lesson text was treated somewhat at length in the golden text discussion last week, but it is probably not out of place to consider the question of motive just here. When Paul said that he was

debtor to the people within his reach, he was simply emphasizing the great motive which actuated his matchless efforts to get the gospel into the hearts and lives of others. It is clear from such passages as Romans 9: Iff that Paul would gladly have given his hope of eternal life for the salvation of his Jewish brethren, if that had been possible. And so, who else but a man with the motive which prompted Paul could say, "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. 9: 19-22.)

Some one has observed that religion is a matter of background, as well as foreground. It derives a part of its charm and power over us because it provides an adequate horizon for the soul. This is true because it has in its scope as well as direction, and breadth as well as intensity. We sometimes magnify the gospel because it is a refuge from present distress, from immediate temptation and sorrow, and satisfies the spiritual hunger of the hour. But let us not forget that the gospel is also a watch-tower, a mount of vision, from which we are able to look at life, at the universe, and at God, in all their inspiring greatness and satisfying fulness.

If religion does not lay hold on us in the heights and depths, it matters little that it should control us elsewhere. But where motives are in evidence and guiding principles of life take root in our very being, it is there that the proper sphere of religion is found. This is in keeping with the teaching of Jesus, when he said, "Ye must be born anew," or, as the margin has it, *from above*. (John 3: 3-7.) This is where our religious activities begin, that is, when we come into the kingdom; and when we

are renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4: 23), and are "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3: 16), it is then that we are properly motivated for the great work which has been ordained for us in Christ.

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.

The theme of the Roman letter is stated in the passage just quoted; for it is in these verses that the apostle Paul laid down the fundamental doctrine which he intended to develop and establish, against the legalistic claims and pretensions of Judaizing teachers. The gospel *versus* the law is the one theme which is never lost sight of in the elaborations of the details of the wonderful letter. But this great generic antithesis of the epistle involves, of necessity, a number of subordinate contrasts, as is so clearly emphasized by Prof. I. B. Grubbs, in his commentary on Romans. In the declaration of the fundamental and all-comprehensive theme of the epistle, there are no less than five cardinal terms or key-words which suggest a fivefold antithesis between the law and the gospel, or, which is the same thing, between Judaism and Christianity.

(1) When it is affirmed that the gospel is "*the power of God unto salvation*," etc., there is a hint as to the weakness of the law with reference to the great end here mentioned. This contrast is brought out fully and clearly in Romans 8: 2-4, which says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law *could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh*, God sending his 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."

We have, in the passage just quoted, an unmistakable statement of gospel power *versus* legal weakness, with reference to man's salvation. God himself, and we say it

with reverence, is powerless to save any one *righteously*, except through the gracious provisions of the gospel of his Son, whom he, accordingly, "set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 25, 26.) Thus, in the first point of contrast, the apostle makes the gospel of Christ stand out in bold relief against Judaistic legalism.

(2) The next key-word in the theme of the epistle now under consideration shows that the saving power of the gospel is altogether divine. It is "the power of God." "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." (2 Cor. 4: 7.) He who wins souls therefore by presenting the gospel message, the simple truth as it is found in Christ Jesus, does so by a power which is not human, but divine; and the justification which follows is based, not on the righteousness of man, but in "the righteousness of God." And it is in this instance that we see the second subordinate antithesis of the theme of the epistle—a contrast which is fully presented in Romans 10: 3 and other places. In speaking of the Jews, Paul says in the passage just cited, "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Phil. 3: 7-9.)

(3) The next grand word in this series points to a difference in the results. The gospel is "the power of God *unto salvation*." It has already been seen that the law, because of the weakness of the flesh, was unable to bring about the salvation of the soul; it led, instead, to condemnation and death. And in keeping with this idea, we read in Romans 7: 9, 10 these words: "And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was unto life, this

I found to be unto death." (2 Cor. 3: 6, 7.)

The fearful dictum of the law was, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." (Gal. 3: 10.) Thus, man's only hope, with his imperfections, was to pass from under a mere legal system, which could only justify the sinless, to a dispensation of grace, which is clothed with divine power, sufficient to justify the ungodly, who are willing to come to Jesus. This blessed assurance comes to all who heed the gospel call: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." (Rom. 6: 14.)

(4) The fourth important point in the theme of the epistle now before us has to do with the universality of the gospel, namely, the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation *to every one* that believeth." The Jew, with his legalistic training and his consequent exclusiveness, could not understand the broad reach of the gospel. If legal justification had been possible to mankind at all, it is a well known fact, based on their inspired history, that only a few cases of rare personal excellency could have set up a plausible claim to divine acceptance on this ground. But no one reached that goal; for it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 10, 23.)

But the Jew, in his delusion, supposed that he had sufficiently kept the law, as to enable him to stand before God in the strength of his own righteousness. He therefore very naturally limited this favor to those who kept the law, and consequently looked upon all others as being inevitably doomed to death without mercy. But Paul's purpose was to show that such a conclusion was wholly unjustified. (Rom. 3: 21-23; 10: 12, 13.)

(5) But notwithstanding the universality of the gospel, it is evident, in the light of the scriptures just cited and other passages, that there is also conditionality; and it is to this fact that the fifth important term in the theme of the epistle points. The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth*." It is at this point that

the contrast between the gospel and the law is so clearly seen as the significant antithesis of faith and works, so extensively developed and so conspicuously held up to our view throughout the remainder of the epistle. The dictum of the law was, "Do this and thou shalt live," while the maxim of the gospel is, "The righteous shall live by faith." *Doing* is the ground of *legal* justification; *believing* is the basis of *gracious* justification!.

The Deplorable Condition of the Gentile World

(Rom. 1: 18-23)

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.

If one will take the time to read Romans 1: 18-3: 20, it will be easy for him to see that Paul's purpose in this part of the epistle is to show the universal need of righteousness. The Gentiles were steeped in sin; and so were the Jews. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written,

There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3: 9, 10.)

And again, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for thorough the law cometh

the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3: 19, 20.)

One has only to read the section of the lesson text now before us, in order to see something of the evolution and progress of sin. When men make their own thoughts and desires the standard of their judgment, the result is bound to be a departure from the way of truth. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) And when men continue to walk in their abandoned ways, they are certain to "hinder the truth in unrighteousness." Jehovah made it possible for the human race to know enough about him and the way of truth and righteousness to live so as to be pleasing to him. But when people turn from God's revelation to themselves and depend on their own wisdom, the result can lead only to sin and destruction. Or, to state the same thing in another way, when men forsake that which God has revealed to them and substitute idolatry, the only way they can then go is downward.

The Inevitable Result of Idolatrous Worship

(Rom. 1: 24, 25)

Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Paul's entire statement (Rom. 1: 18-32) regarding the sinful conduct of the Gentiles is an illustration of that which happens to people, when they leave the truth of God for lives of moral and spiritual abandon. Man is a moral creature, with the power of choice; and he will, if he is unwilling to listen to God, be permitted to choose his own course. Or, to express the same thing in another way, man has the ability to "exchange the truth of God for a lie," and thereby "hinder the truth" by his abandoned conduct.

The aorist tense of "exchanged" denotes an act of the past, but it remains a fact that the context makes it abundantly clear that the result of that deed was being continued; and the present active participle of "hinder" shows the effect which such wickedness was having on the

truth. The original word for "hinder" may also be rendered hold back, hold down, restrain, or suppress. (See Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, *in loco*; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2: 6. 7.) A. T. Robertson notes that truth is out in the open, but wicked men, so to speak, put it in a box, sit on the lid, and hold it down in unrighteousness. Their evil deeds conceal the open truth of God from men. (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 328.)

It is not difficult for any thoughtful person to see how the *principle* of exchanging "the truth of God for a lie" operates with reference to the ordinary ways of living; and it should not therefore be any more difficult for such a person to see how that same principle functions in other areas of our moral and spiritual responsibility. Truth is absolutely essential to acceptance with God in any field of thought or endeavor, where moral responsibility is involved; and any time that something contrary to the truth regarding such an issue is substituted for it, which, of course, amounts to a lie, it will not be possible for one to reach the proper conclusion with reference to that subject.

Man was created in God's own image (Gen. 1: 26, 27), which evidently means that the creature possessed the moral nature of the soul or spirit of the Creator; or, which is the same thing, man's original righteousness was the same as that of God. "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." (Eccles. 7: 29.) Man's departure from God began when the truth of God was exchanged for the lie of Satan, as expressed by the serpent (Gen. 3: 1-8; cf. John 8: 44); and the language of Paul, in the text now under consideration, enables us to see something of the terrible results which followed. Those who are acquainted with history, and especially with the history of the Bible, are aware of the fact that the human race, with only a relatively few exceptions, has never, from the fall of Adam and Eve to the present, been satisfied with, and willing to

accept and abide by, that which God has ordained for his people.

We should remember, however, that God's plans for the good of his people cannot be permanently thwarted; and neither does he himself ever get in a blind alley. His purposes for the good of the race may be temporarily frustrated by the wickedness of his creatures; but truth crushed to earth shall surely rise again. No sooner had Satan, through the agency of the serpent, beguiled Eve, and Adam with her had fallen into sin, than Jehovah announced his plan for the redemption of sinful mankind, which would issue forth from them. In speaking to the serpent, God said, "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." (Gen. 3: 15.) The passage just quoted is sometimes referred to as the earliest gospel, and its practical meaning is that God would send his own Son, born of a woman (Gal. 4: 4), to make possible the salvation of the human race. (Heb. 2: 9; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9.)

The Bible clearly teaches that God does not want any one to be lost (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Ezek. 33: 11); but, being governed by the principles of justice, as well as mercy, it becomes necessary for him to abandon the wicked to their own way, when they are determined to walk in their own ways. "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." (Rom. 1: 28; cf. 1: 26.) Such people reach the point at which their sense of feeling no longer functions. "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." (Eph. 4: 17-19; 1 Tim. 4: 2.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

When and under what circumstances did Paul write his letter to the Roman

brethren?
 Why did Paul have such a longing to visit the brethren in the city of Rome?
 What is known of the origin of the church there?
 What was the probable condition of the church in the capital city when Paul wrote his great letter to those brethren?
 Why would a letter from him at this time probably do so much good in the Imperial City?
 What was the ultimate aim of the Judaizers who were causing Paul so much trouble?

Paul's Motive for Preaching and the Theme of His Message

What motive actuated Paul in his desire to preach the gospel in Rome?
 How did he demonstrate that motive in his work, generally speaking?
 What should be our attitude toward the gospel?
 Why must all acceptable service to God be prompted by worthy motives?
 When, and only when, can people be thus motivated?
 What is the theme of the Roman letter?
 Why was this theme so appropriate when Paul wrote the letter?
 Discuss the five fundamental statements which it contains.

The Deplorable Condition of the Gentile World

After stating the theme of his letter, what was the first point that Paul sought to develop?
 Show how he proved his contention?
 What does this section of the lesson text

teach regarding the evolution and progress of sin?
 What is meant by hindering the truth in unrighteousness?
 Why are such sinners without excuse before God?

In what way did Jehovah reveal himself, so as to make mankind responsible?
 Why are people, generally speaking, so prone to idolatry?

The Inevitable Result of Idolatrous Worship

What truth does Paul illustrate in Romans 1: 18-32?
 How is it possible for one to exchange the truth for a lie?
 How can we know that the principle is still at work today?
 Cite some examples within your own observation of this process at work.
 What place does truth occupy in the Lord's plan for saving the lost, and in their ultimate sanctification?
 In what sense was man created in God's own image or likeness?
 Under what circumstances did he become alienated from his Maker?
 What has always been true of the human race, generally speaking, in this respect?
 What was Jehovah's reaction to man's original sin?
 Why didn't God abandon man to his lost estate?
 What lesson is there in this respect for us?
 Under what circumstances does God finally give his people up to their own ways?

Lesson III—January 21, 1968

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD DECLARED

Lesson Text

Rom. 3: 19-31

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God;

20 Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law *cometh* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God through faith in Je'-sus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction;

23 For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is

in Christ Je'-sus:

25 Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God;

26 For the showing, *I say*, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Je'-sus.

27 Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay; but by a law of faith.

28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

29 Or is God *the God* of Jews only? is he not *the God* of Gen'-tiles also? Yea, of Gen'-tiles also:

30 If so be that God is one, and

he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"By grace have ye been saved"* (Eph. 2: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 3: 1-18.

Daily Bible Readings

January 15. M.....	The Paths of Righteousness (Psalm 23: 1-6)
January 16. T.....	Judging the World in Righteousness (Psalm 9: 1-8)
January 17. W.....	Righteousness Exalts Nations (Prov. 34: 31-35)
January 18. T.....	Turning People to Righteousness (Dan. 12: 1-3)
January 19. F.....	Fulfilling Righteousness (Matt. 3: 13-15)
January 20. S.....	Follow Righteousness (1 Tim. 6: 1-11)
January 21. S.....	A Preacher of Righteousness (2 Pet. 2: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

Grace is unmerited favor, a benefit bestowed upon one who does not deserve it. Such a blessing is always given without compensation, and there is nothing which the one needing the favor can do to merit it. (Rom. 4: 4, 5.) If grace were an obligation on God's part, it would no longer be grace. All the recipients of God's grace are sinners, and as such they deserve to have God against them. God demonstrated his animosity to sin by the cross; but instead of sending a judge or a destroyer to obliterate the offenders, he came in the person of his Son to offer them full and complete salvation. (2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) The supreme sacrifice on the part of Christ makes it impossible for one to think of grace as divine indulgence; or, to express the same thing in other words, grace does not imply the weak and careless forgiveness of sins; for pardon could be effected only by the death of the innocent—the voluntary sacrifice of him who knew no sin. Grace, then, means God's coming to man and providing a way whereby man can return to God; all of which would have been impossible if Christ had not satisfied the holiness of God and the demands of divine justice by dying in the sinner's stead.

Our lesson for today is concerned primarily with the grace of God, which indicates a favorable disposition on his part and is a manifesta-

tion of that quality of his nature which is the source of the undeserved blessings which have to do with salvation from sin. There are variations in the Bible from this central meaning of the term grace, but they are not a part of our study at this time. However, there are two closely-related shades of the general idea of grace which should be emphasized at the beginning of our study, namely, (1) the gospel as opposed to the law of Moses (John 1: 17; Rom. 6: 14; 1 Pet. 5: 12); and (2) God's forgiving mercy, as gratuitous and opposed to merit (Rom. 11: 6; Eph. 2: 5; Col. 1: 6).

As the lesson is applied to us, the sinner needs a blessing which he cannot secure for himself. He needs the forgiveness of his sins and to be regarded as righteous before God; but the New Testament clearly shows that it is only through God's grace that it is possible for the sinner to have these benefits. It does not make any difference how many things may be required of the sinner by way of "obedience of faith," it always remains true that such acts of obedience do not earn or merit salvation; they are simply works which make faith perfect. (James 2: 22.) Nothing which any one can do will destroy the fact that forgiveness, or a state of righteousness, is a benefit which is bestowed upon the sinner by the grace of God. (Tit. 3: 5.)

The Golden Text

"By grace have ye been saved."
This text is a parenthetical state-

ment which is found in Paul's letter to some Christians who had experi-

enced God's grace in their own lives. (Eph. 2: 1-10.) The paragraph just referred to is a part of Paul's argument regarding the manner in which God's redemption was wrought and his people made one. (Eph. 2: 1-22.) A fuller statement of salvation by grace is found in verses 8, 9: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." This passage clearly shows that there must always be a mutual response before salvation can be effected: God's response to the sinner's need, and the sinner's response to God's offer to save.

When it is affirmed that "by grace have ye been saved," the emphasis is on God's part; "it is the gift of God." Salvation is his gift to the sinner; and it was provided through his grace (*the* grace in the original in verse 8), which is equivalent to the gospel. "For *the* grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) The qualifying phrase "through faith" in verse 8 should not be overlooked; for it is just as much a part of the text as is the portion with reference to grace. Salvation for the lost is provided and offered by God's grace; it is received and appropriated by man's faith, which shows that God's grace must be

acknowledged for what it is and accepted by the one in need. This human decision, involving acknowledgement which corresponds to God's grace—"by grace have ye been saved through faith"

Paul makes it plain in the context of the passage now before us that this salvation which is bestowed by the grace of God is not the result of anything which the sinner did, or could do. "Not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." In writing to Titus, the apostle expressed the same thought in these words: "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Tit. 3: 5.) Works as used in these passages refer to *meritorious works* or works which, in and of themselves, procure the desired end. Such works are in sharp contrast with works of obedience. (James 2: 14-26.) Any one therefore who will study Paul's writings will learn that while he vigorously opposed the idea of justification based on meritorious works, he did not oppose, but instead positively taught, justification which is *conditioned on works that are produced by faith*. Obedience which springs from faith is never by Paul, nor by any other New Testament writer, placed in contrast with faith; nor is such obedience ever represented as making faith void. (Rom. 4: 14.)

The Text Explained

The Moral Condition of Mankind and the Law

(Rom. 3: 19, 20)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin.

That which may be referred to as the "doctrinal portion" of Paul's letter to the Romans is from 1: 18 to 8: 39. Chapters 9-11 deal with the problem of the rejection of Israel; chapters 12 through 15: 13 contain

some practical exhortations; and in 15: 14 through 16: 27 Paul includes some personal matters, such as explanations, greetings, and benedictions. With this analysis in mind, it should be noted that the verses which make up this section of our lesson constitute a summary of the discussion of 1: 18-3: 18, in which Paul demonstrated the sinfulness of all men, both the Gentiles and the Jews, and therefore the universal need of righteousness.

The Jews did not hesitate to condemn all Gentiles as gross sinners; and, so far as they, that is, the Jews, were concerned, they did not need any proof from Paul or anyone else, as for that matter, that they were justified in their condemnation of all

men outside the realm of Judaism. And as long as they held that view, they were in no condition to admit their own need of the salvation which God had provided for the human race. The principle underlying all this is just as true now as it was then. Many people, even in the church, are so busy condemning others as to make it impossible for them to see their own need in the sight of God.

Paul wanted the Jews of his day to understand that they were responsible for the doing of that which the Old Testament Scriptures required of them; and since he had just pointed out the fact that the Jews had consistently violated that which God had addressed to them, they were in just as great need as any Gentile. In speaking to the Jews, Paul said, "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, who-soever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things. And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practise such things. And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2: 1-3; read also the remainder of chapter 2 and the first 18 verses of chapter 3.) The comparison which Paul was making in the verses just quoted was based on that which he had just said about the Gentiles in Romans 1: 18-32. The conclusion which Paul drew from the comparison of the conduct of the Jews with that of the Gentiles is that all the world may be brought under the judgment of God; and he impressed that truth upon the Jews by showing them that they had no defense whatsoever for their own disobedience. Their own law, prophets, and sweet singer of Israel had condemned them in no uncertain terms; and they could not deny that which they said: for "we know that what things soever the law [the term *law* is used here to include all the Old Testament saith], it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped," that is, remain silent in the presence of his accusers.

The apostle continues the summa-

tion of his arguments regarding the moral condition of both the Jews and the Gentiles by showing the impossibility of any person's being saved as a result of his keeping any law [there is no article before the word "law" in verse 20, and the term therefore includes both the law of Moses and any other law which the Gentiles might keep. Compare Romans 2: 14, 15]. The purpose of law is not to save (Gal. 2: 21), but to give the knowledge of sin. Phillips renders the two verses of this section of our lesson in these words: "We know what the message of the law is, to those who live under it—that every excuse may die on the lips of him who makes it and no living man may think himself beyond the judgment of God. 'No man can justify himself before God' by a perfect performance of the law's demands—indeed it is the straightedge of the law that shows us how crooked we are." Law therefore served its purpose when it caused men to see how sinful they are; it can bring them down to this point, but it can never lift them up to God. This should be an impressive lesson to those professed followers of Christ who are apparently more concerned about keeping the letter of the law, than in fulfilling its *spirit*.

Righteousness through Faith, Apart from Law, Is Man's Only Hope

(Rom. 3: 21-26)

The fundamental thesis of the letter to the Romans was stated by Paul in these words: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." (Rom. 1: 16, 17.) And then, after showing the universal need for righteousness in 1: 18-3: 20, Paul again returns to the theme of the epistle and shows what the righteousness of God is that which is revealed in the gospel. And it should be kept in mind throughout this study that the righteousness about which Paul is writing is a *revealed* righteousness, rather than one

which comes as a result of legal rectitude. (Phil. 3: 7-9.)

The apostle begins this part of his argument by showing that the righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel is apart from, that is, it is not based upon any legal system (there is no article used with the term "law" in the original); but he quickly adds that both the law of Moses and the prophets gave their testimony concerning this new plan for saving the race. This was done by the many Messianic promises, types, shadows, and prophecies of the Old Testament; and if the Jews had understood their Scriptures aright, they would have welcomed rather than resented this new order of things. (Acts 13: 27.) Ignorance of God's ways will never lead anyone to him. "Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." (Rom. 10: 1-3.) And this principle is just as true now as it was then, all of which means that people who seek to please God should have as their first consideration the desire and the determination to learn and to do God's will, as it is revealed in his word. (John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 10-16.)

The righteousness which is revealed in the gospel is further described as "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Paul constantly holds forth the truth that people of this dispensation are saved, only when they accept by faith God's plan of redemption which was made possible by the death of Christ; for it is only when people believe the gospel that they are willing to obey that which it enjoins. Both Jew and Gentile had been under law, and both had signally failed to attain righteousness thereby; and this had made it necessary for a new plan to be offered. And since this new plan could be made possible only by the death of the righteous for the unrighteous, it was of necessity a system of grace;

and it is opened to anyone who is willing to believe that which has been revealed concerning it. The kind of faith which is required in this connection is fully set forth in such passages as Romans 4 and James 2: 14-26.

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

The word "justify" is a legal term and means to acquit or declare innocent; and, thus, all who have been redeemed by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ are counted as righteous before God, that is, acceptable to him. This is a bold metaphor, picturing God as a judge who acquits the prisoner. And this is done *freely*, inasmuch as only God can bestow such a blessing and he is under no compulsion to do so; it is only own heart that any of the love of his own heart that any man is saved. *Grace*, as we have already seen, is unmerited favor, a benefit bestowed upon one who does not deserve it. The term "redemption" has reference to a releasing which is brought about by the payment of a ransom. As used by Paul and other New Testament writers, the term refers to the deliverance from the wrath of God and the deserved penalty of sin through the sacrificial death of Christ. (Eph. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 7: 23, 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) The sinner is a bondservant of Satan, and must be redeemed from his power. (Col. 1: 13; Rom. 6: 16-18.) This metaphor represents God as the benefactor who purchases freedom for the slave.

To *propitiate* is to appease or render favorable; and this, of course, presupposes an offense which makes the offended ill-disposed toward the offender. Thus, to propitiate the offended is to do something which will placate him, and thereby gain his good will; and the propitiation is the means by which this is done, that is, the offering, action, or sacrifice which makes the offended fa-

vorably disposed toward the offender. As Paul uses the term in the passage now before us, Jesus was the propitiation which made it possible for God to be righteous while passing over, that is, not fully dealing with, the sins committed before the coming of Christ, and in justifying those who have faith in his Son. This is Paul's third metaphor, and in it he compares God with a priest who makes sacrifice for the purpose of securing the forgiveness of sin.

All men have sinned, and as a result they are not what God would have them be—they do not live as he intended that they should. This condition has put a barrier between God and men; and they, in and of themselves, cannot overcome it, no matter how hard they may try. But what men could not do for themselves, God has done for them by sending his Son, and through him making a way for them to return to the Father. (John 14: 6.) When this plan is accepted by the sinner by faith, the total result is salvation by grace.

Salvation by Faith versus Legal Achievement

(Rom. 3: 27-31)

Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the work of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: if so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: nay, we establish the law.

The term "law" in this section of our lesson for today does not refer to the law of Moses, as such, but to any law, probably more accurately to the principle of law, such as Jehovah recognized for both Jews and Gentiles. Moffatt renders verse 27 in these words: "Then what becomes of our boasting? It is ruled out absolutely. On what principle? On the principle of doing deeds? No, on the principle of faith." So also

Lipscomb's comments, *in loco*. Whiteside notes that "the greatest ground for humility is the knowledge that an innocent person died to save me from my own folly. Instead of being the proud possessor of a spotless character, I have to rely on another to cleanse me from my own defilement. And this, depending on the innocent to justify the guilty, is what Paul calls the 'law of faith.' This law of faith is the plan, or arrangement in which is required faith in Jesus, who died for us."

The contrast, then, is between believing and achieving, as Moser points out—"Christ *achieves* and man *receives* justification"; or as Phillips translates the passage, 'What happens now to human pride of achievement? There is no more room for it. Why, because failure to keep the law has killed it? Not at all, but because the whole matter is now on a different plane—believing instead of achieving. We see now that a man is justified before God by the fact of his faith in God's appointed Saviour and not by what he has managed to achieve under the law.'

The concise manner in which Paul asks the questions of verse 29 is significant; and the only way to evade the conclusion he draws, as James Denney points out, "would be to suppose—as is here presented by way of alternative—that God is a God of Jews only. But the supposition is impossible; there is only one God, and therefore he must be the God of all, of Gentiles and Jews alike. This is assumed as an axiom by the apostle." And on the difference between "by faith" and "through faith" in verse 30, if indeed there is a difference, Vincent quotes Wordsworth as saying, "The Jews are justified *out of* (*ek*) the faith which their father Abraham had, and which they are supposed to have in him. The Gentiles must enter that door and pass through it in order to be justified." (Eph. 2: 17.) Verse 31 is spoken from the viewpoint of the Jewish objector, but Paul assures him that the law is set upon a secure footing; and, for the first time, comes into its own place. This is clearly seen in chapters 6-8 where the life

of the Christian is unfolded, and we are shown that *the just demands of*

the law are fulfilled in believers, and in believers only.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning of "grace" as it relates to God?

What was the greatest possible demonstration of the grace of God?

How alone could sin be forgiven?

What is the primary thought of the subject of grace we are concerned with in this lesson?

What two prominent ideas should be emphasized?

In what way is the sinner's obedience related to his salvation?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text written?

What is Paul's argument regarding the manner in which God's redemption is wrought?

What mutual responses are always essential in the matter of salvation?

What, then, are the two parts of salvation?

In what sense does Paul use the term "works" in connection with God's grace?

Why can't people be saved by meritorious works?

The Moral Condition of Mankind and the Law

Give a brief analysis of the contents of the Book of Romans.

What is the place of this section of the lesson text with reference to the general subject?

Why couldn't the Jews realize their need of the salvation which God had provided for all?

What lesson is there in this for us?

Why did Paul seek to place the Jews in

the same category with the Gentiles with respect to salvation?

What does Paul say that the law was designed to do?

What important lesson should we learn regarding the purpose of law?

Righteousness through Faith, Apart from Law, Is Man's Only Hope

What is the fundamental thesis of the Book of Romans?

What affirmation does Paul make with reference to righteousness?

What is the difference between "revealed" righteousness and "earned" righteousness?

In what sense is the righteousness of the gospel apart from law?

What witness was borne to God's plan of saving the race through Christ?

Why did the Jews reject the new order of things?

Why is ignorance of God's ways so hurtful to mankind?

What is the righteousness set forth in the gospel and why is it of grace?

What are the meanings of "justify" and "redemption" as used by Paul in this lesson?

What is a *propitiation* and what is its purpose?

What, then, is salvation by grace?

Salvation by Faith versus Legal Achievement

In what sense does Paul use the term "law" in this section of the lesson text?

On what must every saved person rely for his cleansing from sin?

What is the law of faith?

What is the force of the question which Paul asks in verse 29?

How, then, do we know that God is also the God of the Gentiles?

What objection of the Jews did Paul answer in verse 31?

Lesson IV—January 28, 1968

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 5: 8-17

8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him.

10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life;

11 And not only so, but we also re-

joice in God through our Lord Je'-sus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

12 Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—

13 For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Mo'-ses, even over them

that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

15 But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Je'-sus Christ, abound unto the many.

16 And not as through one that

sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment *came* of one unto condemnation, but the free gift *came* of many trespasses unto justification.

17 For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, *even* Je'-sus Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* (Matt. 20: 28.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 5: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

January 22. M.....	Justified by Grace (Eph. 2: 1-8)
January 23. T.....	Eternal Redemption (Heb. 9: 1-12)
January 24. W.....	Christ Raised for Our Justification (Rom. 3: 16-25)
January 25. T.....	Abraham's Justification (Gen. 15: 1-6)
January 26. F.....	Justified by Works (James 2: 14-26)
January 27. S.....	No Justification by the Law (Gal. 2: 16-21)
January 28. S.....	Justified by His Grace (Tit. 3: 1-7)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

In the First Epistle of John, we read this significant statement: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 6, 7.) This is an all-inclusive affirmation, and it admits of no exception: the blood of Christ, and the blood of Christ alone, cleanses from sin. Or to state the same thing in other words, there is no substitute for the blood of Christ, when it comes to the forgiveness of sin. This truth is stated over and over in the New Testament. (Eph. 1: 7; Heb. 9: 11-17; Rev. 1: 5.) Peter adds his testimony to this great truth in these words: "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." (1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.)

We are not to understand, of course, that the literal blood of Christ is applied to the sinner in cleansing him from sin; that is not

the meaning of the expression, "the blood of Christ," as used in the passages just cited, or indeed anywhere else in its application to the subject of forgiveness. Jehovah made it plain to Noah and his family, after they came forth from the ark, that the life of flesh, including that of man, is the blood thereof (Gen. 9: 4-6; Lev. 17: 10-16); and so, when the Bible speaks of the shedding of blood, as in the case of the death of Christ, the meaning is that his life was taken from him (Acts 8: 33). Therefore, when the New Testament declares that the blood of Christ cleanses from sin, the meaning is that his life which was given for that purpose—this vicarious death—enables God to forgive every sinner who will accept the divine offer of salvation. (Rom. 3: 24-26.)

There is something definite about the term "blood," and, as *The Speaker's Bible* points out, "it is susceptible of no glosses, or disguises, or aliases. All the world over it has but one meaning. You can take the word *love* and you can dilute it away into *affection*, and away a little farther into *regard*, and still farther away into *esteem*, until it becomes a sort of moonlight quality, with all the original warmth and

glow gone out of it. Esteem puts no tender hand under the aching head. Esteem helps no poor man up the hill. Esteem binds up no broken heart, and kindles no fire on the hearth that has gone out. It is too cold. So you can shade the word *truth* away through various synonyms such as *candour*, *frankness*, *veracity*, and the like, until it begins to mix with falsehood, as day merges into night. But take the word *blood*, and see what you can make of it. As a matter of fact, you cannot soften or disguise it or clothe it in some other dress, or find for it some more genteel equivalent. No matter how dainty you may be in the use of language, if you want to speak of blood at all you have got to

say *blood*, for the dictionary will not accommodate you with any synonyms. The word *blood* stands alone, and, as another has said, 'is too simple, too energetic, too solemn to take upon it the faintest gloss of the most reluctant expositor. Its unquenchable ardour burns through the snow which you scatter upon its summit. No winter can loiter upon those ardent slopes.' The word melts through and stands out in all its own naked and rugged strength. It is immensely significant. God has ordained that upon which the salvation of mankind depends shall not be trifled with or disguised or softened away into something else." (Eph. p. 32.)

The Golden Text

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

The idea of service as the law of the kingdom of God was not new in Jewish thought when Christ was here upon the earth. Isaiah more than seven hundred years earlier had emphasized over and over again the fact that the coming Messiah and Redeemer would be a servant. Both the Saviour and the saved are to serve; that is the only way to greatness. Jesus was talking about this very thing when he spoke the words of this text. His disciples had been disputing about how to become great when "Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20: 25-28.)

But if Jesus had not emphasized the glory of service by his teaching, his mind would have been made plain by his example when at the last passover supper he arose from the table, laid aside his garments and girded himself with a towel; and taking the place of a menial servant in an eastern household, he washed the disciples' feet, including

those of Judas who was about to betray him. And when he had finished the washing and had taken his garments and sat down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye called me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." (John 13: 12-17.)

In the words of another: "At the banquet of life, as Jesus interprets life, the greater a man is the more menial is the service which he is ready to undertake. True greatness among the Lord's followers is only to be achieved by the humility which takes the lowest place, and the unselfishness which makes work for others the guiding principle of conduct. No single point perhaps in the original and many-sided teaching of Jesus has stirred men's consciences more deeply, or revolutionized their theory of duty more completely. If he had left behind him no other thought than this, this alone would have marked him out in the eyes of posterity as a moral teacher of unsurpassed greatness." (*The Speaker's Bible*—Matthew, Vol. III, p. 87.)

No Christian today has any right to think that he is making too great a sacrifice; for "ye have not yet re-

sisted unto blood, striving against sin," as Jesus did. (Heb. 12: 4; cf. 2 Cor. 5: 21.)

The Text Explained

The Basis for Man's Reconciliation with God

(Rom. 5: 8)

But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This verse might very properly be called the argument of God's own love for his lost people. (Isa. 1: 18.) In it we are brought face to face with the cross of Christ, and we are able to behold it in the divine light which glorifies it; for when God sends forth his light, we can see the cross as the master-work of grace. And as long as time continues, men will be able to behold the glories of the crucifixion; for that central cross for ever stands in the light of a Sun which never sets. Not only is this cross the symbol of self-denial and the gateway into an eternal peace with God; but over and above everything else for which it stands, we can see the one triumphant argument for God's love. Or, to state the same thing in other words, the cross is the unanswerable proof that God is not willing "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3: 9; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.)

The word "but" with which the verse now under consideration begins indicates a contrast—a contrast between human love at its best and that of God. The preceding verse says regarding the former, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die." The *righteous* man simply does that which he ought to do, and gives to every man his due; while the good man not only does that which he ought to do: he does *all that he can* and proves his moral worth by promoting the well-being of him with whom he has to do. And so, according to Paul, one would hardly die for the merely upright or strictly just man who commands our respect; but he might possibly die for the noble, beneficent man who calls out our affection. (See Vincent, in *loco*.) But Jesus

was under no illusions about those for whom he died. He gave his life for the unpromising and unresponsive—for sinners of deepest dye; all because of God's great love for them.

The term "commendeth" is in the present tense, and the implication is that God continuously establishes his love in that the death of his Son *remains* as its most striking manifestation. That love still speaks, not only to those who have responded to its call, but also to those who are not concerned with that which God has done for them. And the fact that God, knowing the attitude of the world toward him and his Son, does not abandon it to its own destruction, is its only hope. In the words of Edwin Arlington Robinson, But after nineteen hundred years the shame

Still clings, and we have not made good the loss

That outraged faith had entered in his name,

As, when shall come love's courage to be strong!

Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long

Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!

The Blessed Results of This Justification in Christ

(Rom. 5: 9-11)

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

In the first part of the Book of Romans, as we have already seen, Paul showed that both the Jews and the Gentiles were in need of salvation; and then in the latter part of chapter 3 he pointed out the fact that God bestows righteousness upon those who are willing to accept his offer through the sacrificial

death of Christ; this fact being confirmed and illustrated in chapter 4. The basis for all of this is where our lesson for today begins, and the great question in this section of our lesson is: How can God demonstrate his love to the sinner, and bestow on him the divine righteousness? And in answer to this, the argument is from the greater to the less. If the answer to this question is made plain, the rest of Paul's teaching will be much easier to understand.

The apostle has repeatedly called to the attention of his readers that God overcame the enmity between him and man by the vicarious death of his Son; and the argument is that if such grace was demonstrated while we were in a state of hostility, when we were in sin and actual enemies of God, then how much more will he do for us now that we are his beloved children in Christ! The expression "much more" is used four times in this and the next section of our lesson for today. And it is well to note the amount of repetition which is contained in Paul's reasoning regarding the manner in which God deals with his people in bringing them back to him. No one therefore should frown upon such procedure; for repetition is indeed essential to the art of learning.

In speaking of our being reconciled to God, Vincent makes the following observations: "The verb means primarily to *exchange*; and hence to change the relation of hostile parties into a relation of peace; to *reconcile*. It is used of mutual and one-sided enmity. In the former case, the context must show on which side is the active enmity." He then goes on to show that in the Christian sense, the change in the relation of God and man is effected through Christ, and involves the following steps.

1. A movement of God toward man with a view to break down man's hostility, to commend God's love and holiness to him, and to convince him of the enormity and the consequence of sin. It is God who initiates this movement in the person and work of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5: 6, 8; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19; Eph. 1: 6; 1 John 4: 19.) Hence the passive form of the verb in the passage now under consideration; *we were*

made subjects of God's reconciling act.

2. A corresponding movement on man's part toward God; yielding to the appeal of Christ's self-sacrificing love, laying aside his enmity, renouncing his sin, and turning to God in faith and obedience. 3. A consequent change of character in man; the covering, forgiving, cleansing of his sin; a thorough revolution in all his dispositions and principles. (2 Cor. 5: 17; Titus 3: 5.) 4. A corresponding change of relation on God's part, that being removed which alone rendered him hostile to man, so that God can now receive him into fellowship and let loose upon him all his fatherly love and grace. (1 John 1: 3, 7.) Thus there is complete reconciliation. (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 61.)

The joyful reaction which is described in verse 11 is another indication that God has made our new relationship possible through Christ; for the Christian could not rejoice in this manner, had it not been for that which Christ did to bring about his salvation. Christ, as Paul has repeatedly pointed out, stands between the sinner and God's wrath: and when God's offer of reconciliation is accepted, the threat of eternal punishment is removed, so long, of course, as the redeemed person remains faithful to the Lord. It is well to keep in mind that the reconciliation is something which we receive from God, not because of anything which we did to merit his favor (Eph. 2: 8, 9; Tit. 3: 5), but by believing in his Son, whom he set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood. This is God's unspeakable gift to every sinner who will accept it.

The Grace Manifested through Christ *versus* the Ruin Wrought through Adam

(Rom. 5: 12-17)

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.

The entire fifth chapter of Romans, as printed in the American Standard Version of the New Testament, is divided into two paragraphs; and it appears that the

word "therefore," with which the second paragraph begins, is meant to connect Paul's arguments regarding the reconciliation which he made in the first paragraph with that which he set forth in the second. While this is evidently true, generally speaking, it will have to be admitted that the connection between the two parts of the chapter is not as apparent as one might expect. This is due, in part at least, to the fact that the second paragraph of the chapter is one of the most difficult portions of the entire book to understand.

In order to grasp the meaning which Paul wanted his readers to get, one will have to know something about the apostle's literary style. Vincent, in speaking of this, calls attention to his frequent anacolutha (that is, his changes in grammatical construction, or a lack of grammatical sequence and consistency in sentence structure, in order to express strong emotion), the unclosed parentheses, mixed metaphors, sudden digressions, and obscurities arising from headlong impetus of thought and feeling. Many Bible students regard verses 13-17 of this section of our lesson as being parenthetical; and if this is true, then the thought which begins in verse 12 must be understood in the light of the explanations of verses 13-17.

The discussion which begins with verse 12 is with reference to the manner in which sin began with the human race, and the sequence shows that Paul intended that to stand in contrast with the blessings which have come to us through Christ. The principal thought begins in verse 12 and is continued in verse 18ff all of which should be read. The appalling consequences of sin put the human race in direct opposition to God; and it was for that reason that a reconciliation was essential before man could be at peace with his Maker. Although Eve sinned first, it was Adam rather than his wife who plunged the human race into death and destruction; because he was its federal head. The "death" which passed unto all men was probably *spiritual* death, and that, of course, resulted in physical death; for if man had not been cut off from the tree of life

he would have lived for ever in sin. (Gen. 3: 22-24.)

For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

The principal argument in this part of Paul's discussion, as already noted, is the contrast between the ruin wrought through Adam and the redemption which is accomplished through Christ; but before the apostle completes it, he adds several words of explanation. (1) Although sin existed from Adam till the giving of the law of Moses, it was not charged to their account (the original word for "imputed" is used only here and in Philemon 18). This, however, does not mean that there was no law during that period; for if that had been true, the people who lived during that time could not have been such great sinners. (Rom. 2: 12-16; Gen. 6: 11-13.) Paul, apparently, was speaking only of a written or specific law, such as was given to Adam, who was a type of Christ.

But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many.

(2) This verse shows that Paul is speaking primarily of the result of Adam's sin, rather than the personal sins of the people during that period, in contrast with the blessings which come by the grace of Christ.

And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. (3) In this point of contrast, the apostle shows that while the condemnation came as the result of one (Adam's) trespass, God's grace through Christ is the result of many trespasses, that is, God's plan for saving the world grew out of his

desire to save, not just one, but all sinners. What therefore was lost in Adam was unconsciously restored in Christ; but his death did *much*

more than that: it made possible the forgiveness of every personal sin of every individual who is willing to accept the offered mercy.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

How alone can the sins of people be forgiven?
Why is the blood sacrifice always essential for forgiveness?
Just how is the blood of Christ made available for the forgiveness of sin?
Why cannot the idea associated with blood be changed into something else?

The Golden Text

How did the people of Christ's day regard the ideas of service and servants?
What was the basis of their views concerning these questions?
What new dimension did Jesus add to service and servants?
How did he go about bringing this new idea of service into the thinking of his people?
What important lesson is there in this for us?

In what way did Jesus interpret the question at "the banquet of life"?
Why are the most consecrated people of the Lord willing to perform the humblest of service?
Why should Christians feel that they never make too great a sacrifice for others?

The Basis for Man's Reconciliation with God

What great idea is set forth in this section of the lesson text?
What are we able to see in it?
Why will its marvelous picture never cease to greet the eyes of men?
What is indicated by the word "but" with which the section begins?
What is the contrast which is set forth?

What is indicated by the present tense of "commendeth"?

The Blessed Results of This Justification in Christ

What is the basis of our lesson for this section of the lesson text?
How does God demonstrate his love for the sinner and declare him to be righteous?
In what way did he overcome the enmity between him and the sinner?
What is meant by the vicarious death of Christ?
What argument does Paul make regarding it?
What is the thought suggested by the expression "much more"?
Why is repetition so essential to learning?
What is the basic meaning of "reconciliation"?
What are the essential steps in the process?
What is the basis of Christian joy in all of this?

The Grace Manifested through Christ versus the Ruin Wrought through Adam

In what way does Paul connect the two paragraphs of Romans 5?
What is essential to an understanding of the apostle's argument, especially in the second paragraph?
How must we go about interpreting his meaning, if we want to understand him?
What is said regarding the beginning of sin and how is that related to that which follows?
What are some of the explanations which Paul added to his over-all argument?
Was there a law between Adam and Moses? Give reasons for your answer.
What principal difference is noted between that which Adam and Christ did?

Lesson V—February 4, 1968

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Lesson Text

Rom. 6: 1-11

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?

3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,

so we also might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have become united with *him* in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection;

6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin;

7 For he that hath died is justified from sin.

8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.

10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Je'-sus.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."* (Gal. 3: 27.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 6: 12-20.

Daily Bible Readings

January 29. M.....	Baptism Essential (Mark 16: 16; Acts 2: 37, 38)
January 30. T.....	Baptism Demonstrated (Acts 8: 26-40)
January 31. W.....	Some Opposed Baptism (Luke 7: 24-35)
February 1. T.....	Urgency of Baptism (Acts 16: 16-34)
February 2. F.....	Baptism and Salvation (1 Pet. 3: 19-22)
February 3. S.....	Christ's Baptism (Matt. 3: 13-17)
February 4. S.....	Baptized into Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

There is perhaps no New Testament teaching about which there has been more controversy than the subject of baptism. Some have emphasized it to the extent that, in their estimation, not even an infant can be saved without it, while, on the other hand, some deny that it has any importance whatsoever; and as a result they make no pretense of administering it. Between these two extreme views, we can find every shade of opinion on the subject; and we also may expect to find the truth regarding the question between these extremes.

The controversy about baptism centers chiefly around four points, namely, (1) The action of baptism—that is, what particular thing is done when a person is baptized. (2) The purpose or design of baptism—that is, what is it for? (3) The subject of baptism—that is, who may be scripturally baptized? (4) The administrator of baptism—that is, who has the scriptural right to baptize? It is always interesting and profitable to make a comprehensive study of any subject which pertains to our salva-

tion; and if that is done, we are in much better position to consider any phase of the question.

When Jesus gave the great commission to his disciples, he authorized them to make disciples of all nations, that is, inform them regarding Jesus and his plan for saving the world, and then baptize all who are willing to accept his way of life. This is to say that no person should be baptized until he knows enough about the subject to enable him to do intelligently that which Jesus requires of him. (Cf. Matt. 28: 19; John 4: 1; 6: 44, 45; Rom. 6: 16-18.) Any person therefore who submits to baptism before he understands that which is required of him, is only doing a part of that which the Lord has authorized, that is, he is only submitting to the physical act of baptism. And in the same manner, when any one comes to the baptism authorized by Jesus with even one reservation in his heart, he cannot be pleasing to God. The outward act may be correct, but his heart is not right in the sight of God.

The Golden Text

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."

The golden text for today's lesson is taken from that section of Galatians which, perhaps better than any other part of the New Testament,

sets forth the difference between the law and the gospel—Galatians 3: 15-4: 7. In discussing the purpose of the law in its relation to the gospel, Paul first, in verses 15-22, shows that the covenant with Abraham

was not on the basis of law, for the law did not exist for four hundred and fifty years after the promise was made; and he further shows that the covenant which was made with that patriarch was not displaced by the law. And then in 3: 23-4: 7, the apostle points out that the law, in reality, was only for "schoolboys," a kind of "guardian" or "tutor" to lead those who were under it unto Christ. (Heb. 11: 39, 40.) This must have been a devastating, as well as a humiliating, blow to Paul's enemies, the Judaizers.

It should be observed that the "faith" in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken is another name for the gospel. This is certain because the article "the" precedes it in the original. When Luke says that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6: 7), he was saying that they were obedient to the gospel. The gospel and *the* faith are one and the same thing. And so, Paul said to the Galatians, "For ye are all sons of God, through [the] faith [that is, through the gospel], in Christ Jesus." In other words, they were saved in Christ as a result of their having obeyed the gospel; and to be in Christ is to be in the church: for the body of Christ is the church. (Acts 4: 12; 2: 47; Eph. 1: 22, 23; 5: 23.) The "sonship" in Christ must be understood in the light of the figure which Paul

has under consideration, namely, the childhood *versus* the maturity state.

And inasmuch as there is no salvation out of Christ (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 10; Acts 4: 12), it is, of course, absolutely essential that those desiring salvation get into Christ; and the golden text affirms that that is accomplished by baptism. The expression "did put on Christ" (Rom. 13: 14) means, according to Thayer, that they became "so possessed of the mind of Christ as in thought, feeling, and action to resemble him and, as it were, reproduce the life he lived." This was a common expression among the Greeks and Romans, when they wanted to indicate their desire to imitate some one else. Arndt-Gingrich note that Alexander the Great liked to put on the holy apparel of the gods, "and so became Ammon, Artemis, Hermes, Hercules." The use of the figure is expressed by Vincent in this way: "To put on Christ implies making his character, feeling, and works our own." He then quotes Chrysostom as saying, "If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put him on, having the Son in thyself and being made like unto him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature." And again, "He who is clothed appears to be that with which he is clothed." This golden text should be a profound lesson to every professed follower of Christ.

The Text Explained

The Manner in Which Righteousness by Faith Is Attained The Proposition Stated

(Rom. 6: 1-4)

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?

It should be recalled that when Paul stated the theme of his epistle to the Romans (1: 16, 17), he made it plain that the gospel contains God's plan of righteousness, which makes it possible for him to look upon the sinner as if he never sinned. After showing the need for such a plan in Romans 1: 18-3: 20, the apostle discusses the divine side of the plan at length in the remaining verses of chapter three, and on through chap-

ter five, concluding that part of his arguments with these words: "And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly; that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5: 20, 21.)

The statement just quoted is followed by the questions at the beginning of chapter 6, the first of which, "What shall we say then?", being, as someone has noted, "a transition-expression and a debater's phrase," aimed at turning the discussion from God's justification to the sinner's sanctification. Or, to state the same thing in other words, Paul now proposes to show the manner in which the righteousness of the gospel is to

be realized. This is done in great detail in chapters 6-8. If the justification which has been provided by God is not complemented by the sinner's sanctification, that is, his being redeemed from the world and set apart unto God, the grace of the divine side would be in vain. (Gal. 2: 21a; Eph. 2: 8-10; Phil. 2: 12, 13.) Therefore, if according to Paul's conclusion in the closing verses of chapter 5 that grace abounded more exceedingly in proportion to the prevalence of sin, it would be but natural for the untaught and thoughtless to ask, "Well, if that is the case, why not continue in sin, and thereby make more grace possible?" Paul's answer to that question is a ringing "No," and he follows it by a reason for his emphatic negation. When one dies to sin, he is utterly and for ever out of any relation to it, that is, so long as he remains dead to it: and that, of course, would make it wholly impossible for him to live in it. Death always carries with it the idea of separation; and death to sin, practically speaking, is accomplished by faith and repentance. Faith is a change of mind with reference to God and his offer of salvation through Christ, as revealed by the Holy Spirit, while repentance is a change of mind with reference to sin; and when they are both genuine, the result is death to sin. It should be observed that there is a great difference between being dead *in* sin, and in being dead to sin. (Eph. 2: 1ff.)

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

Paul's whole argument here is based on death to sin, and the only alternative to its acceptance is to confess ignorance of the rite by which they were received into the church. The apostle does not imply ignorance on their part that they had been baptized; he simply asked if they were unaware of the significance of the act. If they understood its meaning, then they would also know that they had died to sin; for baptism, being a burial, is only

for those who have died; and since the subject is that of sin, their death was with reference to it.

The baptism authorized by the gospel is both "into" (*eis*) Christ and "into" (*eis*) his death, which means that it is transitional, that is, by it one passes from without to within Christ and his death. To be baptized into Christ is to become one with him, and to be baptized into his death is to become identified with its purpose. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2: 20a.) This is another way of saying that the old self has passed away, and that Christ has taken its place; all of which means that the new man stands within the same relationship to sin, as does Christ.

Practically all Bible scholars recognize verse 4 as being an allusion to the custom of baptizing by immersion. So Wesley, Barnes, Clarke, Conybeare and Howson, et al. William Sanday points out that New Testament baptism has a double function, namely, (1) to bring the redeemed person into personal contact with Christ, so close that it may be correctly described as union with him; and (2) to express symbolically a series of acts which correspond to those things which took place in the case of Jesus in making salvation possible, namely his death, burial and resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:

1-4.) This is another way of saying that the history of redemption is reproduced in the redeemed; and only immersion will answer to the demands of these requirements.

Burial is the natural sequence of death, and a kind of seal of its reality; for only the dead are buried. Baptism, therefore, which is both "immersion" and "emersion" is a symbol of burying a dead body and of raising it up to a new life; and it is for this reason that baptism is directly concerned with the three fundamental facts of the gospel. The sinner must die, just as Jesus did, before he is buried; and after his burial he must be raised up to a new life, in keeping with the experience of Jesus. Referring again to Sanday we note that "all these the Christian has to undergo in a moral and spiritual sense, and by means of his union with Christ. As

Christ by his death on the cross ceased from all contact with sin, so the Christian, united with Christ in his baptism, has done once for all with sin and lives henceforth a reformed life dedicated to God."

In saying that Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, Paul has reference to all the perfections of God which contributed to his resurrection. When we consider Paul's remarks regarding this in Ephesians, it is safe to conclude that in nothing was the splendor of God's power revealed so much as in the event now under consideration. (Read Eph. 1: 19ff.) The term "newness" which is used to indicate the life of the Christian is a stronger expression than *new life*. According to Arndt-Gingrich, the word has the connotation of something extraordinary—that of a new quality of life. (Rom. 7: 6.) In writing to the Corinthians, Paul refers to this new quality of life as a new creature, or, as the marginal note has it, *a new creation*. (2 Cor. 5: 17; Titus 3: 5.) The New English Bible renders Romans 6: 4 in these words: "By baptism we were buried with him, and lay dead, in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead in the splendour of the Father, so also we might set our feet upon the new path of life." Phillips puts it this way: "So we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether."

Union with Christ Brings Victory over Sin (Rom. 6: 5-7)

For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin.

The term "*for*" connects that which is said in this section of our lesson with that which was said regarding the newness of life in the preceding section; and the purpose of this section is to show the absolute necessity for such a life. Our baptism is not concerned with his death and burial only, but also with his resurrection. It was sin which caused the death of Jesus, and it is sin which also makes it essential

that we die; for without our death to sin, we could not be buried with him through baptism into death. But if we were united in that aspect of his experience, we must likewise be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection; for God will as certainly raise up the penitent sinner who has been buried with Christ in baptism, as he did in the case of Christ. (Col. 2: 12, 13; 3: 1.) Anyone therefore who really dies with Christ must of necessity also share in the likeness of his resurrection; which, as we have already seen, obligates the child of God to a new quality or kind of life.

The need for the new type of living is further confirmed by the reference to the crucifixion of the "old man," which is our old self while dominated by sin. The crucifixion of that old self resulted in the death of the body which was ruled by sin; and that implies that the domination of sin has come to an end. Quoting Paul's language to the Galatians again, we can see the practical meaning of this. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. 2: 20.) This, in brief, is what is implied in dying to sin and in being raised in newness of life; for it is Christ, and not sin, who dominates the new man or body. This does not mean, of course, that it is impossible for the new creature in Christ to sin; but it does mean that he will not live a life of sin, so long as he remains in the Lord's favor. (1 John 3: 9.)

The final cause of the sentence which makes up this section of our lesson, "for he that hath died is justified from sin," fully confirms the fact that the rule of sin is at an end in the life of any person who has been crucified with Christ. Sin is here personified, and death is pictured as having cleared the redeemed of any and all claims which sin had on them, previous to their crucifixion. Alford paraphrases the clause in these words: "For, as a man that is dead is acquitted and released from guilt and bondage (among *men*: no reference to *God's* judgment of him); so a man that

has died to sin is acquitted from the guilt of sin, and released from its bondage."

Our Death to Sin Implies a Constant Conflict against Evil

(Rom. 6: 8-11)

But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Paul here resumes the main thought of his reasoning, after the explanations in verses 5-7; and his aim is to show that the new quality of life which the redeemed receive in Christ must be dedicated to God. The "living with Christ" is not the future life in heaven, but the Christian life here and now. The whole context shows that Paul has the present life in mind. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col 3: 1-4; read also verses 5-17 and observe the word "therefore" in verses 5 and 12)

That which has just been said is sufficient to show that the new life which the Christian lives is the

same in principle as that of Christ, namely, inaccessible to death. The scripture plainly says that Christ is our life; and we know that he cannot die. The Christian, of course, can terminate his life by defection from Christ; but if he remains faithful, as he is expected to do, there is no power which can separate him from the love of God. (Rom 8: 31-39) There are few verses in the New Testament which offer greater encouragement to the Christian for constant living in Christ, than those which make up this section of our lesson. Read them carefully and prayerfully.

In commenting on verse 11, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "In this verse the application is made of all that precedes. The death with Christ, the life with Christ, are real, yet to be realized. The truth of being a Christian is contained in them, yet the calling of the Christian is to live up to them. We may forget what we should be; we may also (and this is how Paul puts it) forget what we *are*. We are dead to sin in Christ's death; we are alive to God in Christ's resurrection; let us regard ourselves as such *in Christ Jesus*. The essence of our faith is a union to him in which his experience becomes ours. This is the theological reply to antinomianism." This last term is a compound word from the Greek—*anti*, against, and *nomos*, law—and signifies that "under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is of no use or obligation, on the ground that faith alone is necessary to salvation." (Webster.) Philippians 3: 12-4: 1 is probably Paul's strongest statement against the doctrine of antinomianism.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is there so much controversy regarding the subject of baptism?

What are some of the extreme ideas regarding the question?

Where is the truth usually found when such issues are before us?

What are the four points around which the controversy regarding baptism is based?

Why should people be willing to make a comprehensive study of any important question?

What are the basic issues in the commission which Christ gave to his disciples?

When is a person therefore ready for the baptism which Christ authorizes?

What happens when a person is baptized before he understands the basic meaning of the subject?

How much must a person know before he is ready for baptism?

The Golden Text

What is the general context of this passage of scripture?

How does Paul go about showing the relation of the Law of the gospel?

What effect did the law of Moses have on the covenant with Abraham? Give reasons for your answer.

What purpose does the apostle say that the law was intended to accomplish?

In what sense does Paul use "faith" in Galatians 3:26?
 What is meant by saying that people are baptized into Christ?
 Why must people be in Christ in order to be saved?
 How alone can people get into him?
 What is the meaning of "put on Christ"?

**The Manner in Which Righteousness
 by Faith Is Attained
 The Proposition Stated**

Give the facts as set forth in Romans which lead up to the lesson for today.
 What, then, was the basis for the questions in this section of the lesson text?
 What is the purpose of the questions or what is Paul's aim at this point in the epistle?
 Why did he give a ringing "No" to the questions suggested?
 What is implied in death to sin?
 How is death to sin brought about?
 What is the significance of the act of baptism?
 What two things take place when one is scripturally baptized and what do they signify?
 In what way is the history of redemption reproduced in the redeemed?

What is the meaning of "newness of life"?

Union with Christ Brings Victory over Sin

What is the purpose of "for" with which this section of the lesson begins?
 What, then, is the purpose of this section of the lesson text?
 How is baptism connected with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ?
 What always happens when a person is truly raised up from the dead?
 What is implied by the crucifixion of the old man?
 Is it impossible for a child of God to sin?
 Give reasons for your answer.
 In what sense is the man who died justified from sin?

**Our Death to Sin Implies a Constant
 Conflict Against Evil**

What is Paul's aim in this section of the lesson text?
 What living with Christ is referred to here?
 If Christ is our life, then what kind or quality of life do we have?
 What encouragement therefore do the words of this section of the text give the Christian?

Lesson VI—February 11, 1968

JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST JESUS

Lesson Text

Rom. 8: 1-14

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Je'-sus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Je'-sus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace:

7 Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be:

8 And they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Je'-sus from the dead dwelleth in you he that raised up Christ Je'-sus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh:

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Golden Text.—*"A man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ."* (Gal. 2: 16.)

Devotional Reading.—Rom. 7: 21-25.

Daily Bible Readings

February 5. M.....	No Justification by the Law (Gal. 3: 6-14)
February 6. T.....	The Law of Faith (Rom. 3: 21-31)
February 7. W.....	Redemption through Christ's Blood (Eph. 1: 1-7)
February 8. T.....	Forgiveness through Christ's Blood (Col. 1: 1-14)
February 9. F.....	Baptized into the Death of Christ (Rom. 6: 1-6)
February 10. S.....	Life of Faith (Heb. 11: 24-28)
February 11. S.....	Sin Put Away (Heb. 9: 24-28)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

There are two great rival kingdoms in the world in which we live, and every responsible person is in one or the other of them. There is no neutral ground upon which any one can stand. These kingdoms are, of course, the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. (Col. 1: 13.) The kingdom of Christ, also referred to as his church, is that body over which he reigns as king. When the idea of the church is set forth in the New Testament, the reference is to that body of people who have been called out of the kingdom of Satan, in response to the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14), and they are said to be in Christ because they are his body. (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18, 24.) We saw in our last lesson just how people are brought into Christ. (Gal. 3: 26, 27; Rom. 6: 3, 4.)

The mission of Christ to the earth was and is to endeavor to rescue every responsible individual from the rule of the devil. (Acts 26: 18.) While Jesus was here in the flesh, he made possible the salvation of all men by his death upon the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. (Heb. 2: 9; Rom. 6: 8, 9.) And then before returning to the Father to begin his reign at his right hand, he gave to his disciples that which is

known as the Great Commission. This commission outlines the plan by which the Lord's rescue work is to be done; and it is easy to see that the plan contains two mutually dependent parts, namely, the divine and the human. It is a fact, clearly set forth in the New Testament, that no salvation is possible without the proper function of both of these parts. (Eph. 2: 8-10.)

The great struggle between the Lord and the devil, between the forces of right and the powers of evil, is no light thing; for it is a matter of life and death. Every one who remains in the kingdom of Satan will be eternally lost, while every one who is faithful to the Lord will be eternally saved. And since the cost of salvation is so great, the Lord, so far as he is concerned, does not intend to lose a single redeemed person. If any one is lost, it will be due to his own fault, and not that of the Lord's. Therefore, when one enters into the fold of the Lord there is not only safety from any danger without, but there is no condemnation within; and it is for that reason that he may count on the help of Christ throughout his efforts to live for him. (Heb. 4: 14-16.)

The Golden Text

"A man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." 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, he will soon see that one of the principal causes of disagreement on the subject is the failure to recog-

nize the fact that the term "works" is used in two different senses by New Testament writers. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that unity on any Bible question is never possible until and unless all the principal terms used by inspired writers on that subject are given the same place and meaning that they originally had. Bible terms still have exactly the same meaning which they had when they were first

placed in the divine record; and all that we need to be concerned with now is the selection of English terms which convey the original meaning to us today. When this is done with *all* the terms employed by inspired writers in setting forth the truth regarding any subject, unity on that subject will inevitably follow.

It is easy for the informed Christian to see that the "works" of the text now under consideration refer to the works of the law of Moses, for that is what Paul says; but the uninformed person who is in need of salvation does not grasp the idea so readily. If one will turn to Ephesians 2: 8-10 he will find the term "works" used in that passage in two totally different senses: (1) in the sense of meritorious works, or works which in and of themselves, procure the desired end; and (2) works of obedience. Any work which is commanded of God proceeds from him; and when it is obeyed the result is not meritorious work, but simple obedience. (John 6: 28, 29.) Faith includes all the

works which God requires; and, as has been observed by Canon Westcott, "this simple formula contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works."

The law of Moses would have resulted in salvation, if those who were under it could have kept all of its requirements (Lev. 18: 5; Gal. 3: 10-12); but since that was utterly impossible on the part of fallible humanity, the result was hopeless destruction or a new plan would have to be found. But since God is who he is, he could not be true to himself without making the salvation of the race possible; hence the sacrifice of his Son and the way of faith introduced. This "new and living way" (Heb. 10: 20) indeed requires *works*, but they result from faith and make faith perfect (James 2: 22). The individual has faith in Christ, and that faith leads him to do exactly as Christ commands. There is nothing meritorious about works of this kind, but the one performing them simply recognizes Christ as the author of his salvation (Heb. 5: 8, 9) and seeks to obey him.

The Text Explained

Only in Christ Is There Freedom from Sin and Death

(Rom. 8: 1-8)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death.

The word "therefore" connects that which is said in the chapter now before us with that which goes before, and especially with chapter seven. In Romans 6: 12-14 Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace." The apostle then goes on in the remainder of the chapter and the first six verses of the next to show, by means of two illustrations (the figure of transferring slaves from one master to another and the mar-

riage relationship) something of the new responsibility which those who have been delivered from the law are under.

The remainder of chapter seven is devoted to the purpose of the law of Moses and its relation to sin, in which Paul shows that although good within itself, the law brought the occasion and possibility of sin, resulting in the struggle within the sinner from which only Christ can deliver him. All of this led Paul, who used himself as an illustration, to exclaim, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7: 24-25.) The statement "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" means that he thanked God for the deliverance from sin through Christ.

And so in the first verse of chapter eight, the apostle declares that there is no condemnation to those who have thus been delivered, and who are in Christ Jesus, that is, in

his body, which is his church. The term "condemnation" literally means *sentence* of condemnation. The reason for this is stated in verse 2: The law, or regulative principle, which is inspired by the Spirit, brings to the believer the life which is in Christ Jesus; and not only so, but this law also furnished all that is needed for the continuation of the Christian's life in Christ. (Eph. 1: 3.) The "law of the Spirit" is but another name for the gospel, called also a "law of faith" in Romans 3: 27. Paul has already said (Rom. 1: 16, 17) that the gospel is God's power unto salvation to every one who believes; and Peter declares that "his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life, and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Peter 1:

3, 4.) James Denney wrote that "Sin and Death are conceived objectively as powers which impose their own law on unredeemed men." (Rom. 7: 23.) The law of sin and death cannot refer to the law of Moses, as such; for that law, in and of itself, was good. Sin (personified) simply used the law to bring about its work of destruction. (Rom. 7: 9-14.)

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that t' e ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after flesh, but after the Spirit.

The verses just quoted explain how God accomplished the work of making men free from the law of sin and death. The New English Bible renders them in these words: "What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son in a form like that of our own sinful nature, and as a sacrifice for sin, he has passed judgment against sin within that very nature, so that the commandment of the law may find fulfillment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit."

The law referred to here was the law of Moses, which would have resulted in making people acceptable to God, if they could have kept it perfectly; but since that was impossible, due to human inability to live perfect lives, the result was that sin abounded on every hand (Rom. 5: 20:7: 13) and a new and better plan for saving the race had to be devised (Acts 13: 38, 39). "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. 4: 4, 5.) According to the text now under consideration, Jesus was sent (1) in the *likeness* of sinful flesh (Phil. 2: 7, 8; Heb. 2: 14-18; 4: 15), and (2) "for sin," that is, as an offering for sin (see marginal note, cf. Heb. 7: 27; 9: 28; 10: 10); with the result that sin was condemned in the flesh.

The original word for "ordinance" literally means *regulation, requirement, commandment*, and in this particular place, according to the marginal reading, Vincent, Arndt-Gingrich, et. al., the idea is that of the requirements of the law, that is, the righteousness or kind of life which the law of Moses required of those who lived under it, but which was never possible because of the weakness of the flesh. However, all of this was changed with the inauguration of the scheme of redemption which was made possible by the mission of Christ, and man is now able to live a righteous life in him. According to Moffatt's translation, God sent his Son "to deal with sin and he condemned sin in the flesh, in order to secure the fulfillment of the Law's requirements in our lives, as we live and move, not by the flesh but by the Spirit." (Gal. 2: 21.)

For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Although the term "Spirit" in verses 4-9a of the text now before us is spelled with a capital "S," Bible students are not agreed as to

what Paul had in mind, whether the Holy Spirit or the human spirit. But, viewing the matter from the practical point of view, there does not appear to be any material difference, so far as the lesson is concerned. Robertson thinks that the reference is most likely to the Holy Spirit, or else to the renewed spirit of man. If the reference is to the Holy Spirit, then the meaning is that the people in question are living as he directs through the inspired message; but if the reference is to the human spirit, then the meaning is that the regenerated ones (John 3: 5; Titus 3: 5) are living according to the principles of the gospel. In either case, the Holy Spirit gave the inspired message, and those who are born again are ordering their lives accordingly.

The real lesson which we should learn from the verses now under consideration is the difference between worldliness and deep spirituality. Worldliness does not consist solely in doing certain things, or in being in certain places. It is, rather, an attitude or view of life, a state of mind, a way of thinking. (Matt. 16: 23; Phil. 2: 5; Col. 3: 2.) A person, for example, might be in the most worldly atmosphere and yet not feel at home there, but inwardly revolting against the place and impatient to get away. While on the other hand, one may be in a thoroughly spiritual atmosphere, in a church building, for instance, where Christian worship is taking place, and yet not be in harmony with the spirit of the occasion, but far away in both mind and spirit. It is therefore the trend of one's life which determines his destiny, rather than isolated acts. Thus, when men and women are engrossed by the material things of life, then, however punctual their formal religion may be, they are worldly; and those men and women who, despite their manifold mistakes, still reckon with God and take seriously the teaching of Jesus, are spiritual and follow after the Spirit. The contrast which Paul sets forth in verses 5-8 is also discussed in Galatians 5: 16-26. (See also James 4: 4; 1 John 2: 15-17; Rom. 12: 1, 2.)

The Change Which Is Wrought by the Spirit of Christ

(Rom. 8: 9-11)

But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

The purpose of this section of our lesson is to apply to the Lord's people that which is taught in verses 5-8; and the force of Paul's reasoning is this: *You* (an emphatic expression) can please God; for you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The original word for the expression "if so be that" (*eiper*) means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, *if indeed, if after all, since*; and the passage is translated by Moffatt in these words; "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells within you." The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not only clearly taught in the New Testament (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20); it is essential if one is to be in favor with God. (Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; Eph. 3: 14-19.) The Spirit guides the Christian through the Word. (Eph. 6: 17; Acts 20: 32.)

We learn from Ephesians 3: 14ff that Christ dwells in the hearts of Christians by faith, as a result of the teaching of the Spirit (John 6: 45), which is another way of saying that they have been renewed or made new creatures (2 Cor. 5: 17; Titus 3: 5); or, to change the figure somewhat, God's people today are made "into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (See Eph. 2: 19-22.) And so verse 10 of the text now under consideration sets forth the consequences of the indwelling Christ in his people. We learned in the first part of chapter 6 that we who have been redeemed first died to sin, and then were raised to newness of life; and that we are alive unto God in Christ Jesus. (Col. 3: 4.) Therefore, with Christ dwelling

in us, the body which died to sin at our conversion remains dead; and the spirit which was made alive remains alive unto God. Conditions could not be otherwise with Christ as our abiding Guest. "Righteousness" probably refers to the righteous life which is lived, following justification or the imputed righteousness. (See Rom. 5: 1-11.) Some Bible students think that verse 11 refers to the resurrection to immortality, and that may be true; but there are others who are of the opinion that Paul is saying that God through the Spirit will raise our bodies into righteous service for him. It is interesting to note all three of the Divine Personages are at work in restoring the redeemed people to their proper places.

A Life of Holiness Therefore Is Now Possible

(Rom. 8: 12-14)

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are the two great rival kingdoms which are in the world?
Why does every responsible person have to belong to one or the other of them?
Just what is the kingdom of Christ?
Why did Jesus come to the earth and how did he make possible the salvation of the lost?
What are the two mutually dependent parts of the plan of salvation?
What does the struggle between the Lord and the evil one involve?
What assurance of success has the Lord given to those who are faithful to him?

The Golden Text

What is the basis of justification during the Christian dispensation?
Why aren't religious people agreed regarding the place of works in the New Testament plan of salvation?
How alone can agreement be reached on this question?
What works must those who accept Christ perform?

Only in Christ Is There Freedom from Sin and Death

Give the setting of this section of the lesson text.

Paul, in chapter 6, pointed out the fact that Christian people have been delivered from their former master, sin, and that they are under no further obligations to him; and he here repeats that statement, along with the consequences which will follow if such service is rendered. He also shows how the deeds of the body, or flesh, are to be destroyed, namely, by the Spirit, that is, following his direction. (Col. 3: 5-17.) Too many people try to correct their lives from the circumference, rather than from the center. Or they must alter their habits by correcting their spirit, rather than attempting to improve their spirit by changing their habits. If they are to please the Lord; and this can be done only by subjecting themselves to the direction of the Spirit. (Heb. 12: 14.)

The leading of the Spirit consists of all the influences, such as direct teaching through the inspired word, providential guidance, and strengthening and interceding (Eph. 3: 16; Rom. 8: 26, 27; Phil. 2: 12, 13), all of which is in keeping with the revealed message. The Spirit of God never works independent of or contrary to that which is found in the New Testament.

Why is it that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ?
What was the purpose of the law of Moses and its relation to sin?
What does it mean to be in Christ Jesus?
What are the "law of the Spirit of life" and the "law of sin and death"?
What was the Lord's plan of making people free from the law of sin and death?
Why was the law of Moses unable to do this?
What was the "ordinance" of the law and how was it fulfilled in us?
What is the principal lesson which we should learn from verses 5-8?
What determines whether a person is worldly or spiritual?

The Change Which Is Wrought by the Spirit of Christ

What does it mean to have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in one?
How do God and Christ dwell in the Lord's people?
What is the over-all result of this indwelling?
In what sense does the Spirit give life to our mortal bodies?
What are the three Divine Personages now doing for Christian people?

A Life of Holiness Therefore Is Now Possible

Why aren't the Lord's people subject to the flesh, to live after the flesh?

In what way are the deeds of the body destroyed?
 What mistake do many people make in this respect?
 How does the Spirit lead the Lord's people?
 How do we know that this is true?

Does the Spirit ever work independent of or contrary to his revealed message?
 Give reasons for your answer.
 What are some of the influences which the Holy Spirit exerts on Christian people?

Lesson VII—February 18, 1968

CHRIST FULFILLED THE LAW

Lesson Text

Rom. 10: 1-15

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.

4 For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

5 For Mo'ses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby.

6 But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:)

7 Or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)

8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach:

9 Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Je'sus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him:

13 For, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross."* (Col. 2: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 10: 16-21.

Daily Bible Readings

February 12. M.....	The Law a Tutor (Gal. 3: 23-29)
February 13. T.....	Christ Fulfilled the Law (Matt. 5: 17-20)
February 14. W.....	Example from the Law (Rom. 7: 1-7)
February 15. T.....	Law Nailed to the Cross (Col. 2: 14-17)
February 16. F.....	A Perfect Law (James 1: 19-27)
February 17. S.....	Law of the Spirit (Rom. 8: 1-9)
February 18. S.....	Christ, the End of the Law (Rom. 10: 1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

A given passage of scripture can best be understood in the light of its context, and this is especially true of the passage now under considera-

tion. The lesson text for today is taken from Paul's discussion of the rejection of the Jew; and that, in turn, must be considered in the light of the over-all purpose of the book itself. If those who study these lessons will keep before them an analysis of Paul's letter to the Romans, it will be much easier to get his principal point of view in any particular lesson. Without going into detail, that is, without giving all the sub-divisions, it should be noted that the Book of Romans has five principal parts, namely, (1) The Introduction, 1: 1-17; (2) The Doctrinal Section of the Letter. 1: 18-8: 39; (3) The Problem of the Rejection of Israel, 9: 1-11: 36; (4) Practical Exhortations, 12: 1-15: 13; and (5) Personal Matters: Explanations, Greeting, and Benedictions, 15: 14-16: 27.

As Paul began the discussion of the doctrinal issues involved, he first showed the terrible condition of the Gentile world. The Jews, of course, readily agreed that the picture which the apostle painted in the closing part of chapter 1 was true in all of its details; but Paul told the Jews that they were no better, so far as their standing in the sight of God was concerned. "What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge both of Jew and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; cf. 2: 1ff.) Paul's

reason for stating these things was that the time had arrived in the economy of God when all men were on an equal footing before him, and all would have to be saved in the same way, or upon the same basis. (Cf. Rom. 11: 32; Gal. 3: 22.) This new way of becoming righteous in God's sight is revealed in the gospel, and is open alike to Jews and Gentiles who are willing to accept it. (Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

But the Jews as a whole refused to accept the gospel, and their failure to do so raised a serious question; and many gospel preachers of that day were no doubt frequently asked to explain the strange conduct on the part of the chosen people of God. This refusal to accept the gospel, of course, led to the rejection of the Jews, and prompted the question, Was God unfaithful to his promises in his rejection of Israel? But Paul explained that the failure of the Jews to accept the gospel was due to a lack of faith on their part. They simply were not ready to enter into the filial relationship which Jesus taught and represented. However, the apostle expressed the hope that the Jews would eventually accept Christ; and since this question was certain to arise in Rome, as it did everywhere else, Paul resolved to include a treatment of it in his letter to the brethren there. It is in this light that we must consider the lesson text for today.

The Golden Text

"He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Those who are familiar with the teaching of the Bible are aware of the fact that God dealt with all people from Adam to Moses upon the same general principle; but with the giving of the law at Sinai, a distinction was made between the Jews and Gentiles in their relation to him. The Jews were to be governed entirely under the terms of the law which was given to Moses; but the Gentiles were allowed to go in their own way, with no further direct instruction from God. (See Acts 14: 16.) But this did not mean that the Gentiles had no responsibility before God; for if that had been true, they could not have been adjudged such

great sinners. (Acts 14: 17; Rom. 2: 14, 15.) But any one who will read the epistles of Paul, he will soon see that the law of Moses was to be only a temporary arrangement; and that in due course of time it was to be removed. (See Gal. 3: 15-4: 7; Eph. 2: 14-22.)

But taking an over-all view of the question now before us, it seems that during the fifteen hundred years between the giving of the law of Moses and the inauguration of the kingdom of Christ, God was using the Jews and Gentiles to demonstrate two essential truths, namely, (1) he was allowing the Jews to demonstrate that no one can be saved merely by keeping a law, Rom. 3: 19, 20; and (2) he was, at

the same time, permitting the Gentiles to demonstrate that natural, that is, moral religion is wholly inadequate for the needs of the fallen race. (Rom. 2: 11-16.) And after sufficient time had elapsed for these two demonstrations to be completed, God sent forth his Son to be the Savior of man; and that means that the purpose of the law had been accomplished. (Cf. Gal. 3: 3; 1 John 4: 14.)

The words which serve as our golden text for today are taken from that section of the Colossian letter in which Paul was dealing with that which is known to Bible students as the Colossian heresy; and if one will read the entire second chapter, of which the golden text is a part,

he will see that the apostle was warning the Colossian Christians against four fatal errors, which were probably the constituent parts of the one erroneous system which was being urged upon them. The four errors are, (1) a self-styled philosophy or *gnosis* (knowledge) (Col. 2: 4, 8); (2) Jewish ritualism (Col. 2: 11, 14, 16, 17); (3) angel worship (Col. 2: 18); and (4) ascetic practices (Col. 2: 20-23). Any one therefore who will consider the circumstances under which Paul wrote the words of the golden text will have no trouble in seeing that the old legal system which was given through Moses has no more place in the reign of Christ than the other fatal errors of the Colossian heresy.

The Text Explained

The Manner in Which the Jews Missed the Way (Rom. 10; 1-4)

Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

When Paul began his discussion of the rejection of the Jews, as a result of their having rejected the gospel, he said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9: 1-3.) These are not the words of a man who was bitter toward the Jews, but the heart-felt expression of one who would have given his life for their salvation, if that had been possible. And so, in the passage now under consideration, he wants his readers to know that what he is about to say is prefaced by a sincere prayer to God for those who have rejected God's plan for saving the lost. This reminds us of the words of Samuel which he spoke to the Israelites when they

rejected God and demanded a human king. "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1 Sam. 12: 23.) Elders, preachers, and other teachers in the Lord's church should always remember to manifest this spirit when they are called upon to present some unpleasant truths to others.

Paul well understood the attitude of the unbelieving Jews, because as they were then, so had he been during the days before his conversion. (Acts 7: 54-8: 3; 9: 1ff; Gal. 1: 13-23; Phil. 3: 6.) If zeal alone had been sufficient, Paul and all of his unbelieving brethren would have been saved; but zeal which is acceptable to God must be tempered with knowledge. Zeal without knowledge invariably leads one into error; and people in this kind of a situation not only fail to obey God; they actually reject his commandments. (Cf. Mark 7: 7-9.) Zeal without knowledge frequently causes well-meaning people to injure those who are themselves innocent of any wrongdoing. J. Roy Vaughan points out that which we all know to be true when he says, "This is often demonstrated when brethren rush into print and pulpit and condemn what they believe to be the practice of other brethren, and later find that they are mistaken about the matter. They not only harm themselves, but they

harm their brother in the Lord." The Holy Spirit has seen fit to record many examples of this unfortunate practice of allowing zeal to function without knowledge. (Acts 21: 17ff; 26: 9ff; Josh. 22: 10.) In the words of Julius Bate, "Zeal without knowledge is like a fire without a grate to contain it; like a sword without a hilt to wield it by; like a high-bred horse without a bridle to guide him. It speaks without thinking, acts without planning, seeks to accomplish a good end without the adoption of becoming mean." While on the other hand, zeal with knowledge causes people to be careful not to go beyond that which is written. (1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9; Matt. 7: 21-23.)

The righteousness of God about which Paul is here speaking is the righteousness which is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1: 16, 17), while their own righteousness was that which they sought to attain by keeping the law. Paul himself had tried that very thing before his conversion, as may be seen by reading Philippians 3: 4-5. In verse 9 of that same chapter he says, "And be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." This, of course, was after he became a Christian, and it shows the difference between one's own righteousness and that which is from God. This danger of seeking one's own righteousness by following his own way of thinking is just as potent today, as it was in Paul's time, whether one is in the church or out of it. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) No one can ever please the Lord by anything less than the faithful following of that which has been spoken through the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 1: 6-10.)

The expression, "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth" is susceptible of either of two meanings, both of which are true. The term "end" could signify either termination or purpose, or both. We know that Christ terminated the law when he died upon the cross, as the golden text plainly states; and we also know that the end, that is, the aim or purpose of the law was righteousness. But when it was demonstrated that imperfect human beings

could not keep a perfect law, it was then revealed that the righteousness which the law would have given, had it been kept, can be found only in Christ. (Gal. 2: 21; 3: 10-14.) The law ended with the death of Christ for every one, whether believer or unbeliever, but it appears that whatever the apostle was writing about in the verse now before us concerned believers only. "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth." This probably was intended to show that the aim of the law is fulfilled in Christ. (Gal. 3: 24.)

The Nearness of Christ and His Salvation

(Rom. 10: 5-10)

For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. The reference here is to that which Moses said in Leviticus 18: 5: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah." This was Paul's authority for saying that the righteousness of the law had to be achieved by perfect obedience. But that was something which no human being had ever done, or could do, and the result was that the law only emphasized sin and demonstrated the need for a Saviour. (Rom. 7: 13.) Phillips renders the verse now under consideration in these words: "Moses writes of righteousness-by-the-Law when he says that the man who perfectly obeys the Law shall find life in it—which is theoretically right but impossible in practice."

But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)

This statement is based on that which Moses said as he was concluding his third discourse to the children of Israel, just before his death. After speaking the words of the law to them, he said, "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven,

and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deut. 30: 11-14.)

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul are aware of the fact that he frequently quotes from the Old Testament scriptures, and that he often adapts that which he quotes to whatever question he may have before him. (Heb. 13: 5, 6; Deut. 31: 6; Josh 1: 5.) Regarding the subject now before us, Paul evidently meant to show that there was no further need for miraculous manifestations, so far as the gospel itself is concerned. And with this in mind, he personified the righteousness which is by faith, and allowed that righteousness to warn against insisting that Christ be brought down from heaven, or raised up from dead, in order that the unbelieving Jews might accept him. The gospel had already been fully established. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4; Rom. 1: 4.) There is therefore no further excuse for a failure to believe and obey it.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

In making the application of the words of Moses, Paul is saying to the Jews that the righteousness which is by faith does not involve any painful search or laborious work on the part of those who desire it. Christ has already accomplished all that is essential to salvation; and all that is necessary is to accept by faith that which the gospel declares, instead of the long and Painful, as well as futile way of trying to establish one's own way of righteousness by obedience to the law. The two essential things, so far as people are concerned, are faith in the heart and confession

with the mouth. Faith, of course, is to be understood in its comprehensive sense, that of putting into action that which is required of the believer. (John 3: 36; James 2:

14-26.) This is what Paul means by "obedience of faith," with which he begins and closes the epistle to the Romans. (1: 5; 16: 26.)

The term "confess" literally means to say the same thing, to acknowledge as true that which has been affirmed. God has declared that Jesus is his Son, and when we confess him we are acknowledging that to be true, or are saying the same thing. The King James Version of Acts 8 shows that the eunuch was revealing the state of his heart to Philip, in response to that which the evangelist said to him. (Acts 8: 36.) Any one who makes known by word of mouth his faith in Jesus, having repented of his sins, is a proper subject for baptism; but we should remember that that is not the only time and place for the confession of our faith in Christ. (Heb. 10: 23; 13: 15.) There will be many times in the life of a Christian when he will have the opportunity to confess the name of Christ. (John 12: 42, 43.)

The Promise of Salvation Is for All

(Rom. 10: 11-15)

For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him; for, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The "scripture" referred to here by Paul is Isa. 28: 16 (cf. Rom. 9: 33), and it is interesting to observe that the apostle changes it from the singular "he" to the universal "whosoever"; and it is upon this point that the whole of his argument turns. Any one who believes on Christ will do that which he says (Luke 6: 46); and when that is done, he will never have it said of him that he has been put to shame. The Lord will never be ashamed of any faithful child of God. (Matt. 10: 32, 33; Mark 8: 38; Heb. 2: 11; 1 John 2: 28; Rev. 3: 5.) Paul announces the same truth here that Peter did in Acts 10: 34, 35, namely that "God is

no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." To "fear" is to reverence God or have the proper respect for him, while to "work righteousness" is to do that which he commands. (Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15.) To "call upon the name of the Lord" is to do as he directs (Acts 22: 16); for it is evident from Matthew 7: 21-23; 25: 11-12, that a mere calling the name of the Lord will not suffice. The quotation which Paul makes in verse 13 is from Joel 2: 32 (cf. Acts 2: 21), and it is again interesting to note that Paul changes from "Jehovah" (God) to "Lord" (Jesus), which implies of course, that the apostle regards the Son as possessing "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2: 9.)

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why is it well to consider the context when attempting to understand a given scripture?

What are the five principal parts of the Book of Romans?

What was Paul's purpose as he began the doctrinal portion of his letter to the Romans?

What was his reason for showing that Jews and Gentiles were alike before God?

What serious question was raised by the refusal of the Jews to accept the gospel?

Why did the apostle discuss the subject in his letter to the Romans?

The Golden Text

In what way did God make a distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles?

What happened to each of the two peoples at that time?

How do we know that the law of Moses was only a temporary arrangement?

What two essential truths did the Jews and Gentiles demonstrate during the time of the law?

Why was it necessary that the law of Moses be removed when Christ became the Saviour?

The Manner in Which the Jews

Missed the Way

What kind of spirit did Paul manifest

of good things!

The questions which Paul asks in the verses just quoted are rhetorical, and they require a negative answer. The reference to being unable to preach without being sent is to the original proclamation of the gospel, a thing which no uninspired man could do. (1 Cor. 2: 6-10.) It is, of course, a perversion of this scripture to try to make it mean that no one today can preach unless some one, or some church, sends him. It is also a misuse of the passage to endeavor to make it imply that no one can hear, that is, learn the truth without a preacher. Inspired preaching was necessary in order to have the gospel message made known to men; but now that it has been reduced to writing, anyone, with even limited ability, can study it and learn the will of the Lord. (John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.) The quotation regarding the feet of them who bring glad tidings of good things is from Isaiah 52: 7; and the idea is that since the bearer of the message had to travel by foot, the feet were exalted as the objects of praise.

when he discussed the rejection of the Jews?

What lesson should we learn from his example?

In what way was Paul prepared to understand the attitude of the unbelieving Jews?

Why is zeal without knowledge insufficient to make people acceptable to God?

What serious mistakes do people often make when they lack knowledge to influence their zeal?

What is the meaning of "righteousness" in this section of the lesson text?

How may people seek their own righteousness today?

In what sense is Christ the "end" of the law?

The Nearness of Christ and His Salvation

Why did Paul say that the man who did the righteousness of the law would live thereby?

Did any purely human being ever do that? Give reason for your answer.

What, then, did the law actually do?

What quotation did Paul make from Moses and what application did he make of it?

What lesson should the Jews have learned from this and also people of this day?

What two things are essential to those who would be righteous before God?

In what sense does Paul use the term faith in this connection?

In what way are we to understand the place and purpose of confession in our lives?

The Promise of Salvation is
for all

What scripture did Paul quote here and
in what way did he adapt it?
In what sense will "believers" not be put
to shame?
What is the attitude and practice of those
who are acceptable to the Lord?
What does it mean for one to call upon
the name of the Lord?

What change did Paul make in the scrip-
ture he quoted from Joel and why?
What is the nature of the questions which
Paul asks in verses 14, 15?
Whom did Paul have in mind when he
said, How shall they preach, except
they be sent?
Is a preacher essential to one's learning
the truth today? Why?
Why were the feet of them that brought
glad tidings beautiful?

Lesson VIII—February 25, 1968

THE WILD OLIVE TREE

Lesson Text

Rom. 11: 13-24

13 But I speak to you that are
Gen'-tiles. Inasmuch then as I am an
apostle of Gen'-tiles, I glorify my
ministry;

14 If by any means I may provoke
to jealousy *them that are my flesh*,
and may save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them
is the reconciling of the world, what
shall the receiving of them be, but
life from the dead?

16 And if the firstfruit is holy, so
is the lump: and if the root is holy,
so are the branches.

17 But if some of the branches
were broken off, and thou, being a
wild olive, wast grafted in among
them, and didst become partaker with
them of the root of the fatness of
the olive tree;

18 Glory not over the branches:
but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that
bearest the root, but the root thee.

19 Thou wilt say then, Branches
were broken off, that I might be

grafted in.

20 Well; by their unbelief they
were broken off, and thou standest
by thy faith. Be not highminded, but
fear:

21 For if God spared not the nat-
ural branches, neither will he spare
thee.

22 Behold then the goodness and
severity of God: toward them that
fell, severity; but toward thee, God's
goodness, if thou continue in his
goodness: otherwise thou also shalt
be cut off.

23 And they also, if they continue
not in their unbelief, shall be grafted
in: for God is able to graft them in
again.

24 For if thou wast cut out of that
which is by nature a wild olive tree,
and wast grafted contrary to nature
into a good olive tree; how much
more shall these, which are the nat-
ural *branches*, be grafted into their
own olive tree?

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*Did God cast off his people? God forbid.*" (Rom. 11: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 11: 1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

February 19. M.....All Nations Blessed (Gen. 12: 1-3)
February 20. T.....Every Nation Included (Acts 10: 34, 35)
February 21. W.....Gospel for All (Matt. 28: 18-20)
February 22. T.....Peter and Barnabas Waver (Gal. 2: 11-16)
February 23. F.....Freedom from the Law (Gal. 5: 1-12)
February 24. S....."Now the People of God" (1 Pet. 2: 6-10)
February 25. S.....No Respect of Persons with God (Rom. 2: 1-11)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

If we keep in mind the relation-
ship which Galatians and Romans
sustain to each other, it will be

much easier for us to understand
Paul's over-all purpose in writing
those two epistles. It is generally

thought that Galatians was written before Romans, and the dates usually given by many conservation Bible students are (1) Galatians, A. D. 57; and Romans, A. D. 58. It was probably when Paul arrived in Corinth, on his third missionary journey, that the news of a crises in the churches of Galatia reached him. The "unauthorized" Judaizers had taken advantage of his absence, and had been at work among the Galatian brethren. This news regarding the condition of the Galatian churches excited both his astonishment and indignation. The Judaizers had been signally defeated in the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15; Gal. 2: 1-10); but it appears that they decided to carry the war into the territory of their greatest opponent, and endeavor to resist him in the very center of his influence—in the very heart of the Gentile churches which Paul had founded.

When Paul received the information that the Galatians were removing from him who had called them in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel (Gal. 1: 6), he realized the seriousness of the situation, and hastened to do something about the grave condition before it became irremediable. The abrupt manner in which he began the epistle, and the severity of the language he used, showed his sense of the urgency of the occasion, as well as the greatness of the danger. Something had to be done to meet the onslaughts of the Judaizers. Galatians is one of

the most vigorous and vehement of all of Paul's letters which have come down to us. It has been described as a thunderbolt which he hurled from Corinth into Galatia. But a few months later, and in a calmer mood, he discussed the same general subject more fully in his letter to the Romans; but in the latter epistle he discussed a subject which is only barely mentioned in the letter to the churches of Galatia, namely, the new attitude toward the Jews in the Christian dispensation.

The failure of the Jews to accept the gospel of Christ raised a serious question, and many gospel preachers of that day were no doubt frequently asked to explain this strange conduct on the part of the people who for fifteen hundred years had been God's chosen people. This refusal to accept the gospel, of course, led to the rejection of the Jews as such, and led to the question, Was God unfaithful to his promises in his rejection of Israel? But Paul explained that their failure to accept the gospel was due to a lack of faith on their part. They were simply not ready to enter into the filial relationship which Jesus taught and represented. However, the apostle expressed the hope that the Jews would eventually accept Christ; and since this problem was certain to arise in Rome, as it did everywhere else, Paul resolved to include a treatment of it in his letter to the brethren there, which he did in Romans 9-11.

The Golden Text

"Did God cast off his people? God forbid." As Paul presented his argument for gospel universality in the preceding chapters, he only needed to show by the Scriptures that the Gentiles were to be received into the Lord's favor, without having to become Jews, as the Judaizers contended; but the same Scripture which proved his point also showed that the reception of the Gentiles would so move the Jews to anger and jealousy, that they as a people would reject the gospel, and thereby forfeit their right to be regarded as God's covenanted people; and as a result become a cast-off or rejected people. In introducing the first ten verses of chapter 11, *The Standard Bible Com-*

mentary has this to say: "This fact is so clearly and emphatically proved that it might be thought that, as Tholuck puts it, 'the whole nation conjointly and severally, had, by some special judgment of God, been shut out from the Messiah's kingdom.' The denial of this false inference is the burden of the section now before us."

Furthermore, the closing verses of chapter 10 clearly show that the responsibility for Israel's rejection was their own. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a

preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily, Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you. And Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. But as to Israel he saith, All the day long I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Rom. 10: 13-21.)

Thus, the critics of Paul doubtless said that he was teaching the utter rejection of the Jews; but he hastened to show that he would not advance a theory which would make it impossible for him to be saved. He then pointed out the fact that Elijah had thought that all the Israelites were hopeless, but Jehovah has showed him that such was not the case. (Read Rom. 11: 1-10.) In the first part of Romans, Paul had stated that both Jews and Gentiles were sinners before God (Rom. 3: 10, 23; cf. Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 11: 32); and inasmuch as the gospel is addressed to all people (Mark 16: 15; cf. Col. 1: 23), any individual, whether Jew or Gentile, has the privilege of accepting it (Mark 16: 16). When Paul says, "And so all Israel shall be saved," he evidently had reference to all "true Israel." (Rom. 9: 6ff; cf. 2: 28, 29.)

The Text Explained

A Message to the Gentiles

(Rom. 11: 13-15)

But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and may save some of them. For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Introducing his transient remarks regarding the Gentiles, Paul says this, "I say then, Did they [that is, the Jews] stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Rom. 11: 11, 12.) The passage just quoted is rendered by Phillips in these words: "Now I ask myself, 'Was this fall of theirs an utter disaster?' It was not! For through their failure the benefit of salvation has passed to the Gentiles, with the result that Israel is made to see and feel what it has missed. For if their failure has so enriched the world, and their defection Proved such a benefit to the Gentiles,

think what tremendous advantages their fulfilling of God's plan could mean!"

The synonyms "fall" and "loss" in verse 12 may also, according to Greek scholars, be translated *defeat* and *false step or blunder*; and the reference is evidently to the attitude of the Jews toward Christ and his church, or, which is the same thing, their effort to destroy them both. This blunder and defeat resulted in opportunities of salvation for the Gentiles; but "think what tremendous advantages their fulfilling of God's plan could mean!" Paul did not want the Jews to think that they were hopelessly lost; and he did not want the Gentiles to think that he had forgotten them, while discussing the plight of the Jews.

It appears that perhaps the majority of the Christians in Rome were Gentiles, and Paul wants them to understand their relation, both to the Jews and to the gospel. He reminded them that he was an apostle of Gentiles; and that he intended to make the most of that ministry; "in order to make my fellow-countrymen jealous," and thereby save some of them. Or, to state the same thing in another way, he was trying to win as many Gentiles to Christ as possible, in the hope that

the Jews would come to see what they had missed, and "would so investigate the testimony concerning the Christ as to become believers in Jesus as the Christ." Thus, Paul would not only be an instrument for saving the Gentiles, but would also indirectly be the means of saving the Jews who turned to the Lord as a result of their jealousy.

Verse 15 is practically a repetition of verse 12. It was pointed out earlier in this lesson that all people, both Jews and Gentiles, were placed on an equality before God with reference to salvation; and inasmuch as God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34, 35), all men who would be saved must come to God through Jesus Christ, or, which is the same thing, they must become obedient to the gospel (Mark 16: 15, 16). When the Jews rejected the Lord's offer of salvation through Christ, that gave the Gentiles an opportunity to hear and obey (Acts 13: 44-47), with the result that those who accepted the Lord's offer were reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5: 18-20). The receiving of the Jews—any Jew—into the Lord's kingdom could be likened to life from the dead (Eph. 2: 1, 5, 6), but "life from the dead" in the passage now before us probably was Paul's way of describing *unimaginable blessings*. (Cf. *The Expositor's Greek Testament, in loco*.)

A Word of Warning

(Rom. 11: 16-21)

And if the first fruit is holy, so is the lump: and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree: glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that barest the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee.

It should be observed that Paul, all through the scripture which serves as our lesson text for today, employs the principle of parallel-

ism; or, which is the same thing, stating the same general truth in two different ways. The people of Israel, under the law of Moses, were required to bring the first-fruits of their harvest into the house of the Lord. "The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shalt bring into the house of Jehovah thy God." (Ex. 23: 19.) The people were not permitted to eat of their crops until the law of the first-fruits had been complied with; but after that the remainder of the harvest was holy, or, which is the same thing, acceptable by God for their use. (Lev. 23: 9-14; Num. 15: 17-21; Neh. 10: 34-38.)

This same principle of the first-fruits was applied to the first converts to Christ, when the gospel began to be preached. God accepted the people who made up the church on the day of its beginning, and that meant that the whole nation of the Jews would have been accepted to him on the same terms. Some Bible students, on the other hand, hold that the "first-fruits" (the "dough offered as first fruits"—Revised Standard Version) and the "root" refer to the patriarchs of the covenant-making period of the Jewish or Hebrew race, that is, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Jer. 11: 16, 17; Rom. 9: 5; 11: 28.) But whether the reference was to the first converts or to the patriarchs, the principle of the first-fruits with reference to the whole was the same.

The manner in which Paul illustrated the lesson which he wanted the Gentile Christians to understand, is relatively simple; and if one does not try to press the figure too far, he, too, should have no difficulty in grasping the lesson intended. "Some" of the branches does not imply that others were not molested; for we have already seen that all men were regarded as sinners when the gospel began to be preached. The idea which Paul set forth was that the Gentiles were given the opportunity of accepting the gospel, when the Jews refused to hear, believe, and obey it. The olive tree in question was the Jewish economy or race, while the wild olive tree represented the Gentiles.

It appears to be a trait of our fallen nature to take pride in any blessing which we may receive at

the seeming expense of some one else. As already pointed out, the refusal of the Jews to accept the gospel of Christ paved the way for the Gentiles to have access to it; and that could, and may have in some of the latter, lead them to boast of their exalted position. But Paul reminded the Gentile converts that they were only branches; and if it were not for the "root of the fatness of the olive tree," they could not even have their great blessings. The branches did not bear the root; it was the root which made it possible for the branches to live.

But in spite of Paul's warning, it appears that the Gentiles still wanted to say that natural branches were broken off of the olive tree, that they might be grafted in. That was true, replied Paul; but it was because of the unbelief of the Jews, and the Gentiles were grafted in because of their faith. (Mark 16: 15, 16.) The apostle then went on to tell the Gentiles that God would no more favor unbelieving Gentiles than he did unbelieving Jews. (John 15: 1-6.)

The passage now under consideration is one of the many scriptures which clearly teach the possibility of apostasy. Any thoughtful student of the Bible knows that the cast-off Jews have no hope of salvation in their present state; and Paul reminded the Gentiles that they would themselves be rejected of God, if they did not maintain their faith. No one, either Jew or Gentile, can be saved apart from the gospel today. It is refreshing to read from Charles B. Williams' *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles* the following words: "But he reminds them (that is, the Gentile Christians) that they must not boast against Israel because they have supplanted the Jews in the favor of God; he has thus favored the Gentiles because of their simple faith in Christ; he has rejected the Jews because of their unbelief. Furthermore, if the Jews cease to be unbelieving and accept Christ, they will be grafted back on to their native stock. He warns the Gentile Christians that their faith must continue, for they will be branches broken off, just as Israel was." Thus, this outstanding commentator, in contrast with many others, makes it plain that

faithfulness must continue, if salvation is to be enjoyed in the world which is to come.

The Lesson Further Illustrated

(Rom. 11: 22-24)

Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

This section of the lesson text begins with another illustration of the fact that God is no respecter of persons. His goodness is manifested toward them that obey him; but his severity will be meted out to them who turn their backs upon him. Jehovah is both merciful and just; and since that is true, he can only deal mercifully with the obedient, and punish the disobedient. Paul, in speaking of this principle in an earlier part of the epistle, says, "Who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2: 6-11.)

The apostle Paul is continuing his argument against Gentile pride, and he wants all who have been received into God's olive tree from the non-Jewish world to have a clear understanding of their relative position. The middle wall of partition (Eph. 2: 14-22) had only recently, comparatively speaking, been removed; and the Jews and Gentiles had not been made aware of the fact that they both stood or fell on the same ground before God. The Jews

felt that the Gentiles had no right to be called God's children, unless they first became Jews; and the Gentiles, on the other hand, were in danger of thinking that the people of Israel had been rejected by God, primarily for the purpose of making it possible for them to come into God's favor. Paul's purpose here was to clear up this misconception on the part of the Gentile Christians in Rome.

The apostle's illustration of grafting, as he himself points out in verse 24, was contrary to the accepted method of grafting. The orchardist, for example, grafts a superior tree or branch to an old inferior stock, and expects the grafted shoot not to be like the inferior stock, but to produce the fruit of the superior shoot. But in Paul's illustration, the Gentile, the inferior shoot, is grafted on to the superior stock, Israel, and is expected to be God's genuine olive tree, which is, according to Paul himself, contrary to nature.

In commenting on this question, *The Interpreter's Bible* notes that although a wild olive shoot would not normally be grafted onto a cultivated olive tree, yet Paul found a way of describing the deep debt of men and women who enter into a rich heritage which is not their own. They did not help to fashion it, did not contribute anything to it, but share with the original developers its abundant wealth. It has been observed on every side how this can and does happen in the realm of culture. There are people, for instance, from an entirely different

background who discover the resources of another civilization, and with both delight and gratitude explore and enter into its riches.

This same thing can and often does happen in the spiritual realm. Those who were brought up and nurtured in another faith can be brought to appreciate and appropriate the blessings which God gives to his people in Christ. And it sometimes happens that people who have been mistaken with reference to the pure and unadulterated religion of Christ have come to recognize values to which familiarity and/or indifference had blinded those who had long professed to be the true servants of the Lord; and it is then that the expression *become partakers with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree* becomes particularly appropriate.

Although Paul probably did not choose his metaphor of grafting with any attempt to suggest subtle overtones of meaning, it is, nevertheless, worth noticing that a fruit tree, drawing wealth from the deep soil and making it available for man's support, is especially appropriate to a religious tradition embedded in the accumulation of past revelations and discoveries. Whatever one may think of Paul's effort as a sustained comparison, it is impossible to deny that he coined an expression which gives utterance, with unusual felicity, to the experience of drawing on the resources of a rich tradition which is not our

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the general relationship between the Books of Galatians and Romans?

Why is it important to understand and keep in mind this relationship?

Under what circumstances did he write the two books?

Why did Paul discuss the problem of the rejection of the Jews?

The Golden Text

What led Paul to ask and answer the question of the golden text?

What two lessons did the Scriptures which he cited teach?

What false inference did the Gentile Christians apparently draw or were in danger of drawing?

Why was Israel rejected?

How did Paul go about showing that the rejection of Israel was neither final nor complete?

A Message to the Gentiles

How did Paul introduce this part of his treatise regarding the Jew?

In what sense are the synonyms "fall" and "loss" in verse 12 to be understood?

What was the apostle's purpose in discussing these things?

Why did Paul refer to the fact that he was an apostle of Gentiles?

What did he mean by saying that he glorified his ministry?

How are both Jews and Gentiles to be saved?

What did Paul say regarding the "casting away" and the "receiving" of the Jews?

A Word of Warning

What is the principle of "parallelism" and what use did Paul make of it in this lesson?

What was the law of the "first-fruits"?

In what way did Paul employ the principle of first-fruits in this lesson?

In what way did Paul illustrate the relation of the Jews and Gentiles?

What did he mean by the "olive tree"?

What trait of our fallen nature did Paul call attention to here?

How did the Gentiles, apparently, react to his illustration?

What important lesson did Paul call attention to with reference to a continuation in the favor of God?

The Lesson Further Illustrated

In what way does Paul introduce this section of the lesson text?

Why is God no respecter of persons?

What did Paul say regarding this in the first part of the epistle now before us?

What did he particularly want the Gentile Christians to understand?

In what way was Paul's illustration with reference to grafting contrary to nature?

What important truth did that illustration enable him to set forth?

Show how this truth finds expression in our own society.

Discuss this principle with reference to people's coming into the Lord's kingdom today.

What can you say regarding the appropriateness of Paul's illustration of grafting?

Lesson IX—March 3, 1968 THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

Lesson Text

Rom. 12: 1-9

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God *which is* your spiritual service.

2 And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.

4 For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office:

5 So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.

6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of our faith;

7 Or ministry, *let us give ourselves* to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, *let him* do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 12: 10-20.

Daily Bible Readings

February 26. M..... True Discipleship (Matt. 5: 1-16)
February 27. T..... Characteristics of Faithful People (2 Pet. 1: 1-11)
February 28. W..... Consecrated Citizenship (Rom. 13: 1-10)
February 29. T..... Citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3: 17-21)
March 1. F..... Denying Self (Luke 9: 57-62)
March 2. S..... Living for Christ (Phil. 1: 19-30)
March 3. S..... Paul's Example (Phil. 3: 12-16)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

It would be difficult to find a normal and thoughtful man who would not like to be made better; and it is*

certainly God's will that every one should grow into the likeness of his Son. Not only does God desire

such; but, under the right conditions, it is as natural for a character to become beautiful, as it is for a flower; and if there is not some means for bringing about such a change, then God's supreme gift to the world has been forgotten. The following Scriptures clearly indicate that there is a divine process for producing better lives: Rom. 8: 29; 1 John 3: 1-3; 2 Cor. 3: 18. The last passage just listed reads this way: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit."

The formula for the transition of character will produce the desired results, as certainly as the right conditions produce electricity, or any other mechanical experiment. This rule for the transformation of character is given in many parts of the new Testament; but the finest expression of it is found in the passage which was just quoted from Second Corinthians. We should keep in mind the fact that we *are* transformed; and since that is true, it follows that no man can transform or change himself. (See John 3: 3-5; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 10; Tit 3: 5-7; cf. Gal. 2: 20.) Something on the outside produces the change in the thermometer; and the same thing is true of man. But inasmuch as man is a moral being, with the freedom of choice, he must be both susceptible to the change and a party to it. The formula we are now considering may be further illustrated by two laws, namely, the first law of motion and the law of assimilation.

(1) *The first law of motion:* "Every body continues in its state of rest, or of uniform motion in a straight line, except in so far as it may be compelled by *impressed forces* to change that state." It follows therefore that if we are not

changed, we have failed to put ourselves in the way of the impressed forces. (2) *The law of assimilation:* All that we see, know, feel, and believe, becomes a part of us; and, to that extent, influences us. This is by far the most important truth which underlies the formula now under consideration. And if events change men, much more do persons. We are, as every one knows, influenced by those we meet; and the closer the association, the more complete the change. It is the law of influence that we tend to become like those whom we habitually admire. We cannot speak or do evil in the presence of some people; and if that association should continue, think what the result would be! (Cf. 1 John 3: 6.)

The development of character is a slow process, and it cannot be completed in a day. In the words of Edward Ward Carmack, "An act often repeated hardens into a habit; and a habit long continued petrifies into character." Great care therefore must be continually exercised, if our characters are transformed as they should be. The story is told of an artist who had almost completed a statue, but it was not yet dry. While he was waiting for it to dry, a sudden freeze came upon him at midnight. He lay awake and thought 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 to his studio, they found him dead—frozen to death; but his work of art lived! Every Christian should realize that the image of Christ is forming in him (Gal. 4: 19); and he should make every sacrifice to see to it that the divine work is completed.

The Golden Text

"Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." The words just quoted contain both a warning, and an encouragement to resistance. They assume, as indeed, the entire Bible does, that there is such a thing as evil, that contact with it is inevitable, and that ruin and defeat by it are not impossible. Evil is all about

us, even within us; and the solemn truth is that we must overcome it, or be overcome by it. There is no such thing as peaceful coexistence with evil. Evil meets us every day, and it must be met and vanquished every day, or it will destroy us. Sometimes it comes suddenly and forcefully upon us, taking us by

surprise: and sometimes it works steadily and persistently, wearying us into compliance. Sometimes it works through our passions and lusts, and sometimes through "our constitutional infirmities: It varies its methods, and is different in its workings with different people—even different in the same people at different times and under different circumstances. But regardless of the time and manner of the attack, we know that the conflict with evil is a struggle for life.

The particular point which Paul was discussing, when he penned the words of the golden text for today, was an exhortation not to give way to the desire for revenge. The full statement of the context is as follows: "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men. Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12: 17-21; cf. 2 Kings 6: 20-23.)

But the spirit of revenge is not the only evil which Paul warned against; and we do the text no violence when we extend the application to include all forms of evil. The root meaning of "evil" is unregulated desire; and desire is that quality in men which corresponds to gravitation in physical bodies. If all is well with us, desire will keep us moving around our true center—God; but if it is concentrated upon some object apart from God, the result is sin. (James 1: 13-16.) What destruction would be wrought if the planets could get detached from their true orbit! The most powerful and successful opposition which we can register against evil is personal, positive, constructive good. This enemy of all mankind cannot be overcome by legislation and talk; the only means at our hands for certain victory is practical righteousness. It is difficult for evil to survive in the face of superior character, righteous action, and benevolent institutions. We should not hesitate to destroy a weed; but our motive should be to prevent it from smothering the golden grain. The destruction of evil is not enough; we must overcome evil with good. This is sometimes a slow process, or even an expensive method; but it is the only effectual one.

The Text Explained

The Call to Full Surrender

(Rom. 12: 1, 2)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The general outline of the Book of Romans is as follows: (1) Introduction, 1: 1-17; (2) The Doctrinal Section, 1: 18-8: 39; (3) The Problem of the Rejection of Israel, 9: 1-11: 36, which also in a sense is doctrinal, but on a different subject; (4) Practical Exhortations, 12: 1-15: 13; and (5) Personal Matters: Explanations, Greetings, and Benedictions, 15: 14-16: 27. The principal doctrinal

section of the book is that of salvation by faith, in contrast with the effort to gain redemption through the law of Moses. This same subject is, to some extent, also discussed in Paul's treatment of the rejection of the Jews; but the emphasis there is with reference to the question regarding God's faithfulness to his promises which were made concerning Abraham and his descendants.

The term "therefore" at the beginning of the practical portion of the epistle now under consideration: "I beseech ye therefore, brethren,"—for the reasons which had been discussed—implies a close connection between the doctrinal part of the letter, and the exhortations which actually grew out of that which had been said. *The Speaker's Bible* notes that at this point we are

standing on the watershed of Paul's letter to the Romans. The beginning of chapter 12 is like the "Great Divide" over which the traveller passes when he ascends the Rocky Mountains from the Great Plains, and then descends with his face set toward the Pacific Coast. When such a traveller reaches the top of the mountains he is said to be on the roof of the world, where he observes the rivers flowing in opposite directions; and just so it is with those who reach the point of division between the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Romans. The first eleven chapters tell of the wonderful redemption which is ours in Christ Jesus; while the chapters which follow show how that great blessing should affect our daily lives. The thought in the first part of the book has been moving from heaven to earth; but from this point it begins to move from earth to heaven, as the redeemed rejoice in their salvation. Thus Paul clamps and binds together the two sides of Christianity—doctrine and practice—into one inseparable whole.

That, to be sure, is always the Bible's way of doing things. It first reveals that which God has done for his people; and then shows what grateful faith leads them to do. Charles B. Williams, in commenting on this section of the lesson text, says, "Because Christ has redeemed you; because God by grace has brought you into right standing with himself and made you his children; because he is keeping you secure in all life's struggles for your final glorification; because the Spirit is dwelling in you and helping you transform yourselves to be like Christ; for all of these reasons I appeal to you to offer your bodies at once as living sacrifices to God. What a fine piece of logic! Spiritual logic that ought to move every Christian to immediate consecration to God and higher living! The Christian sacrifice is a living sacrifice. Jewish sacrifices were dead animals. Christian sacrifices are bodies with living souls dominating them, so living personalities. To offer these to God is our logical devotion to him. Many modern versions translate it "spiritual wor-

ship." But the word in Greek is *logiken*, from which we derive our words logic, logical, logician. Then the context demands the translation *reasonable*, or *rational*, or some word akin to these. The verse begins with *therefore*, giving the conclusion of a logical argument. The word service is better translated devotion or worship, as it means something rendered to God."

We know from the teaching of Jesus and the apostles that the life which we are now living is the time for preparation for the world which is to come. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." (Matt. 6: 10b; cf. 1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.) And so the apostle, in the passage now under consideration, exhorts the Lord's people (1) not to do something, and (2) to do something; or, to state the same thing in another way, the exhortation is both negative and positive. Phillips renders verse 2 in these words: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity."

When people come to have the right attitude toward God, it is then that they are able to recognize and understand what the will of God for them is. (John 7: 17.) In the words of another, "The character and personality are transformed by the renewing, renovating ideas and ideals which the mind reaches by the study of spiritual truths—reading the Scriptures, religious books and papers, and by meditation. This is why the transformation of most Christians is so slow! They study and meditate on spiritual things so *seldom* and so *spasmodically*." The goal and standard of this transformation is the will of God; and that will is the highest law in the universe. It is good, because it came from God and leads to the good of those who make a genuine effort to live up to it; it is acceptable (well-pleasing, margin), because it was ordained by God; and it is perfect, because it is entire, that is, complete, and lacking in nothing—it is God's perfect law.

Finding Our Place and Discharging Our Responsibility in the Christian Community

(Rom. 12: 3-8)

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

The apostle Paul frequently referred to the fact that grace had been given to him for the work which had been ordained for him. (1 Tim. 2: 7; 2 Tim. 1: 11; Rom. 15: 15, 16.) This made Paul an authoritative teacher, with both the right and the authority to teach the followers of Christ their duty and responsibility. Whether the reference indicated by the "measure of faith" was to spiritual gifts or each one's own ability, the principle involved was the same. No man should seek to exceed his abilities, as in the case of the men with their master's talents (Matt. 25: 14-30; cf. 1 Cor. 4: 1-7); and no one should endeavor to under-estimate his ability, as Moses did (Ex. 3: 10-12). Each man should make an honest effort to discover that which he is best fitted to do, and then put his whole heart into the accomplishment of the task before him. (Eccles. 9: 10.)

Various translations, when compared with each other, often serve as good commentaries on a given passage of Scripture. Phillips renders the section of the lesson text now under consideration in the following words: "As your spiritual teacher I give this piece of advice to each one of you. Don't cherish ex-

aggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all. For just as you have many members in one physical body and those members differ in their functions, so we, though many in number, compose one body in Christ and are all members of one another. Through the grace of God we have different gifts. If our gift is preaching, let us preach to the limit of our vision. If it is serving others let us concentrate on our service; if it is teaching let us give all we have to our teaching; and if our gift be the stimulating of the faith of others let us set ourselves to it. Let the man who is called to give, give freely; let the man who wields authority think of his responsibility; and let the man who feels sympathy for his fellows act cheerfully."

Any one who reads our First Corinthians, and especially the twelfth and fourteenth chapters, will easily see that some of the brethren in Corinth, both coveted and exercised the spiritual gifts, which they considered spectacular, for their own exaltation. While there is no evidence to justify a conclusion one way or another, it is, of course, possible that there were some brethren in Rome who were tempted to follow the same course some of the Corinthians did; and if so, that would easily account for the exhortation which Paul gave in verse 3.

In referring to both the Corinthians and the Romans, Charles Hodge says, "He [that is, Paul] showed his readers that these gifts were all gratuitous, and were, therefore, occasions of gratitude, but not grounds of boasting. He reminds his readers that the design for which these gifts were bestowed, was the edification of the church, and not the exaltation of the receiver; that, however diversified in their nature, they were all manifestations of one and the same Spirit, and were as necessary to a perfect whole as the several members of the body, with their various offices, to a perfect man. Having one Spirit, and constituting one body, any exaltation of the one over the other was as unnatural as the eye or ear disregarding and despising the hand or the foot. As this tendency to abuse

their official and spiritual distinctions was not confined to the Corinthian Christians, we find the apostle, in this passage, giving substantially the same instructions to the Romans."

Any careful student of the Bible, and of human nature, knows that the same principle which Paul referred to is just as applicable today, as it was in New Testament times. Christians now, as in all ages of the present dispensation, have various and sundry gifts and talents; and they are expected to use whatever ability or opportunity they may have in the service of Christ, and not for selfish purposes. Just because one is an outstanding preacher, song leader, Bible teacher, or whatever his capability may be, he should not try to let it be known that he is better than some less gifted brother, who endeavors to do the same kind of work. (2 Cor. 10; 12.)

When Paul wrote our First Corinthians, he said, "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. 4: 7.) Some are gifted business men, and they can therefore, as a rule, contribute more money to the cause of the Lord. Others are qualified for the eldership, and they should be willing to discharge that responsibility. No human body can measure up to its potential, unless each several member performs its part; and that is precisely what the apostle Paul teaches regarding the members of the church. (Eph. 4: 11-16.)

Sincere Love and Its Inexorable Workings

(Rom. 12: 9)

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." The basic meaning of the term "hypocrite" is an actor, or, which is the same thing, one who pretends to be that which he is not. One might act the part of George Washington in a play; but he would not be George Washington. Judas Iscariot pretended to be a friend of Jesus when he betrayed him; but we all know that he was not his friend. The first part of this section of the lesson text

is rendered in *Living Letters* in these words: "Don't just pretend that you love others." Genuine love is the only kind which is acceptable to God, and its principal ingredient is sincerity; or, which is the same thing, freedom from any pretense.

The section of the lesson text which we are now considering is the beginning of a list of moral maxims for Christian living. If genuine love rules the heart, then all is well; but if one's love is a mere pretence, the life which follows will be of the same essence. In the words of Charles B. Williams' translation: "Your love must be true. You must always turn in horror from what is wrong, but keep on holding to what is right." As indicated by the translation just quoted, the original words for "abhor" and "cleave" are present participles and indicate continuous action, that is, keep on abhorring the evil; and keep on cleaving to that which is good. It is only in this way that love can be genuine, that is, without hypocrisy.

The original word for "abhor" is found nowhere else in the New Testament, but its meaning—hate, detest, abominate, loathe—is both clear and distinct. The original word for "cleave," on the other hand, occurs several times in the New Testament. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." (Matt. 19: 5.) "And he went and joined [literally, glued] himself to one of the citizens of that country." (Luke 15: 15; cf. 1 Cor. 6: 16, 17.) This shows that there must be the closest possible union between the Christian and that which is good. This same truth is taught in other parts of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. "Hate the evil, and love the good." (Amos 5: 15.) "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (Heb. 1: 9.) This therefore is a basic duty in the Christian life.

David Lipscomb, in commenting on the passage now under consideration, says, "View with horror and dread and shrink from every evil deed as from a deadly poison. Wrongdoing is the poison of the

soul. It unfits for heaven and educates for eternal ruin. A man cannot love and honor the good from the heart without detesting the evil. He must come to abhor it in himself as in others. If it is wrong that he must abhor, he will abhor it in himself more than in others. David says, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.' (Psalm 119: 104.) To abhor the wrong does not carry

with it the hating of the wrongdoer. He will try to deliver him from the wrongdoing. So a man who loves himself and hates wrong will seek to deliver himself from wrongdoing. A Christian has no right to be neutral between right and wrong. He is under the same obligation to oppose the wrong that he is to maintain the right. But he must do it in the proper manner."

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why do normal and thoughtful people want to become better?
What provision has God made for the realization of this desire?
What is the formula for bringing about a transition of character for the better?
What is the first law of motion?
What is the law of assimilation?
Why is the process of character transformation a slow process?

The Golden Text

What two propositions are contained in the words of the golden text?
How does evil work in the average life?
What particular point was Paul discussing when he penned the words of the golden text?
What is the root meaning of evil?
How alone can evil be overcome?

The Call to Full Surrender

State and discuss the general outline of *he Book of Romans.
What is the force of the word "therefore" at the beginning of chapter 12?
How are the doctrinal section of Romans and the practical section related?
In what way does Paul bind the two sections together?

What kind of sacrifice is the Christian urged to offer to God?
In what way is this the conclusion of a logical argument?
What twofold exhortation is contained in verse 2?
When are people able to recognize and understand the will of God?
Why is the transformation of character for the better so slow?

Finding Our Place and Discharging Our Responsibility in the Christian Community

In what way was Paul qualified to give the instruction now under consideration?
What possible motive was behind his exhortation.
What particular teaching did the apostle give in this section of the lesson text?
In what way is the same principle which underlies this lesson applicable today?

Sincere Love and Its Inexorable Workings

What is the basic meaning of "hypocrite" or "hypocrisy"?
How is this section of the lesson text related to the remainder of the chapter in which it is found?
What is the force of the grammatical construction of the terms "abhor" and "cleave"?
What are the meanings of the two terms?
Discuss their practical application in our lives today.

Lesson X—March 10, 1968

CIVIL RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIANS

Lesson Text

Rom. 13: 1-10

1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God.

2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment

3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the

power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same:

4 For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing.

7 Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

8 Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."* (1 Pet. 2: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 13: 11-14.

Daily Bible Readings

March 4. M.....	Christian Citizenship (Rom. 13: 1-10)
March 5. T.....	Attitude toward Rulers (Acts 23: 1-5)
March 6. W.....	Paul Uses His Citizenship (Acts 16: 35-40)
March 7. T.....	Duties of Citizens (Luke 3: 12-14)
March 8. F.....	Civil Ordinances (1 Pet. 2: 13-17)
March 9. S.....	Obligation Not Universal (Acts 4: 18-20)
March 10. S.....	Paul's Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25: 6-12)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

Those who accept the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of the revelation which God has made concerning his Son are fully convinced that his people have the needed information in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, to enable them to act according to the divine will in all of the relations of life. This is precisely the claim which the New Testament itself makes, as may be seen by reading the following passages. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1: 3.)

It is also true that the Lord expects his people to live the Christian life in the world, in every place in which they may chance to be. When Jesus prayed for his disciples on the night before he went to the cross, he included this petition: "I

have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John 17: 14-16.) Not only does the Lord want his people to live their lives among their fellow men, he also wants them to exercise an influence for good upon them. (Matt. 5: 13-16.) Such influence can be exerted only by living as the Lord directs, in all of life's relationships.

With the foregoing facts before us, it will have to be admitted that the Lord has revealed to his people through the Holy Spirit that which he wants them to know regarding their duties toward civil governments, or he has not. If he has left this area of our lives to be determined by human reason and the demands of the times, then the inspired Scriptures do not furnish us with a complete guide for all of our duties; for no one can deny that Christians have duties toward the powers that be. Thoughtful people, of course, will not say that the New

Testament is insufficient for all of our needs. Therefore, if every one will simply maintain an open mind and a sincere desire to learn and to

do that which is unquestionably the will of the Lord, there will be no doubt about the result. (John 7: 17; Matt. 13: 12.)

The Golden Text

"Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." It will be much easier to see the significance of this statement, if it is studied in the light of its context. In the preceding verses, Peter gives this admonition: "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2: 11, 12.) Thayer defines the original word for "sojourner" as follows: "2. in the Scriptures a *stranger, foreigner, one who lives in a place without the rights of citizenship*; of Christians, whose fatherland is heaven, 1 Peter 2: 11." See Acts 7: 6, 29; Eph. 2: 19 where the same original word occurs; cf. Gen. 15: 13.

Thayer also defines the original word for "pilgrim" to mean *"one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives: hence strangers; sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner"*; in the N. T. metaphor, in ref. to heaven as the native country, *one who sojourns on earth*; so of Christians, 1 Pet. 1: 1; joined with [sojourners], 1 Pet. 2: 11; cf. 1: 17."

See Heb. 11: 13 where the same original words occur; cf. Gen. 23: 3. Christians are citizens of a kingdom; and as such, they owe their allegiance, first and foremost, to him who is their king, even Jesus. They are sojourners and pilgrims here among men.

With these facts before us, we should carefully read the paragraph which begins with the words of the golden text: "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Peter 2: 13-17.) This is enough to show that God expects his people to be obedient to all the laws under which they live; and that the motive, which prompts such obedience, is "for the Lord's sake." If Christians are always moved in their relationship to their government by this consideration, they can be reasonably sure that they are doing the right thing.

The Text Explained

The Christian's Relation to Civil Governments

(Rom. 13: 1-5)

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God.

This is one of the clearest statements on record regarding the origin of and authority for civil governments. It is true that God allows people to have their own ways in many things, and especially in the matter of setting up the form of government which they want; but there is one thing of which we may always be certain, namely, he has never removed himself from these powers that be. This truth was

clearly stated by Daniel in these words: "The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men." (Dan. 4: 17.) One needs only to read the Book of Revelation in order to see that the same principle will always be in operation. God's providence embraces nations, as well as individuals.

The formation of human governments is essential for the preservation of the moral order of society, and even for the existence of the

kingdom of God itself here upon the earth. No thoughtful person can visualize an orderly maintenance of the church in the midst of anarchy. It is difficult enough for it to survive in those countries where the state is opposed to it, or even unfriendly; but if there were no human law and order for the people who comprise that area, the work of maintaining the kingdom of Christ would be well-nigh impossible. It is easy to see therefore why Christians are not at liberty to revolt against whatever government they may be subject to, or under which they live. Whatever the character of the state, it is of God (Isa. 10: 5), and the Christian is under obligation to recognize its divine right in the persons and requirements in which it is presented to him, so says the apostle Paul in the passage now under consideration.

Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldst thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same; for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

This is one of the clearest statements in the New Testament, and it is one of the longest statements in God's word, regarding the attitude of Christians toward the governments under which they live. When Paul wrote these words, he had in mind the Roman government; and it is interesting to note that the tyrant Nero was on the throne. And he was still on the throne when Paul urged Timothy to offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings . . . for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the

knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2: 1-4.)

Some people are of the opinion that Paul would not have written these things, if the great persecutions of Christians under the Roman rulers had already begun; but such an idea impeaches the mind and will of the Holy Spirit who inspired his message. It is certain that God knew what was coming, and the text plainly says that "he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment," that is, condemnation. Furthermore, Jesus had already been crucified as a malefactor, and Paul himself was frequently in conflict with the law as a disturber of the peace; but all of that was due to temporary misuses of the law. Even Jesus told Pilate that he would have had no power against him, unless it had been given to him from above. (John 19: 11.) This should be enough to show that persecution and injustices in the name of the law would not have caused Paul to write otherwise regarding the divine sanction and purpose of civil government.

The statement that "rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil," may cause some to wonder about it in the light of the bitter persecutions which some rulers waged against the Lord's people. We may not be able to understand why many of those things were so; but we do know that great trials have a purifying effect upon the righteous, while giving the wicked the opportunity of demonstrating their attitude so that they may be without excuse before God in the last day. But if and when evil rulers demand of Christians something which is contrary to the will of the Lord, they are not only not under obligation to comply with it; they are positively taught to obey God rather than men. (Acts 4: 18-20; 5: 27-29.)

Later on, when Peter wrote his first epistle he said, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good? But even if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give

answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." (1 Peter 3: 13-17.)

The statement, "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil," is understood by many Bible students as referring to the divine authority for capital punishment; and in view of the general teaching of the Bible on the subject, there can be little doubt about the correctness of the position (Cf. Gen. 9: 6.). However, it should always be remembered that the infliction of such punishment is always the function of the state, and not of the individual. In commenting on the verse now before us, Vincent notes that the sword is "borne as the symbol of the magistrate's right to inflict capital punishment. Thus Ulpian: 'They who rule whole provinces have the right of the sword (*jus gladii*).' The Emperor Trajan presented to a provincial governor, on starting for his province, a dagger, with the words, 'For me.' If I deserve it, in me." Verse 5 assigns the two motives for being in subjection to the powers that be, namely, fear of punishment and for conscience sake.

The Christian's Obligation to Support the State (Rom. 13: 6, 7)

For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

The duties which this section of our lesson require of Christians must be discharged as a matter of conscience. Alford cites a remark by Tertullian to the effect that what the Romans lost by the Christians refusing to bestow gifts on their temples, they gained by their conscientious payment of taxes, Conscientious people, who have

been properly taught, are nearly always thoroughly dependable. Sir Richard Steele has observed that "conscience, honor, and credit, are all in our interest; and without the concurrence of the former, the latter are but impositions upon ourselves and others." It was Jesus who said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's"; and no man can be pleasing unto the heavenly Father who refuses to order his life accordingly.

The terms "tribute" and "custom" have a place in the lives of most people. *Tribute* is the tax which they pay for themselves, while *custom* is the tax which they pay on goods. Vincent expresses the matter in this way: "Tribute on persons; custom on goods." Today we have many kinds of taxes, both direct and indirect; both out in the open and hidden. Most American taxpayers are familiar with the statement of Mr. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in which he said, "Taxes are what we pay for civilized society." Edmund Burke noted that "taxing is an easy business.—Any projector can contrive new impositions; any bungler can add to the old; but is it altogether wise to have no other bounds to your impositions than the patience of those who are to bear them?" The French philosopher Montesquieu said that "as a general rule in constitutional states liberty is a compensation for the heaviness of taxation, and in despotic states the equivalent for liberty is the lightness of taxation."

But when the taxes are properly levied, the conscientious Christian will promptly pay them; and even if they are improperly levied, he will endeavor to do the right thing about them. Edward Gibbon, in his *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, points out that one of the five major causes of the fall of the empire was "higher and higher taxes, until the load became unbearable, while officials of the empire continued to spend public funds with reckless indifference." If we did not know that the great historian of another day said that, his statement might well be thought of as an item from a modern book or one of our daily papers. Paul, of course, had in mind governments

which are functioning as they should, and his inspired teaching obligates conscientious Christians to render to all their dues, whether it be taxes or proper respect.

Love Is the Perfect Motive for All of Our Relationships

(Rom. 13: 8-10)

Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

The idea here seems to be against making a debt or obligation which one cannot or will not pay, such as money or moral debts. If a man borrows money, buys something on time, or makes a promise to do something, and then discharges his obligation in keeping with his word, it does not appear that he owes anything in the sense that Paul here prohibits. In other words, Christians are forbidden to make obligations which they cannot or will not fulfill. Of course, it sometimes happens that circumstances make it impossible for one to do as he promised, and as he fully intended to do; and if and when that happens, he should immediately get in touch with his creditor or the one to whom he is obligated, and do his best to make satisfactory arrangements.

There is, however, one debt which every Christian should incur, and that is the debt of love. This debt involves more than any other which one can make, and it is also one which he can never fully pay. This is because love is a principle of living which can never be exhausted.

No one who adopts this rule of living will ever be able to say, I have done all that I am supposed to do, and there is nothing more for me to undertake. This way of living embraces all law and goes beyond it; and it would be, if we were able to fulfill it, the complete realization of the perfect life.

No law, not even the Ten Commandments, can cause a loveless man to want to do right. That is the reason that the civil authorities have to have the sword, and that is the reason that no man was ever justified by law in the sight of God. But when a person beholds the love of God in the gift of his Son for the sins of the world, and yields himself to him in obedience to the gospel, it is then that he begins to learn the meaning of love. (1 John 4: 19.) And then when he adopts love as the principle of his life, he will make every effort to fulfill the demands of the law, not because the law requires it, but because his rule of life is motivated by a higher principle—that of love. Love can and does change duty into delightful service; and it is only when love is absent that law and duty are necessary.

How sweet, how heav'nly, is the sight,

When those that love the Lord
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfil the Word.

When each can feel his brother's sigh,

And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.

When free from envy, scorn, and pride,

Our wishes all above,
Each can his brother's failings hide,
And show a brother's love.

Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above;
And he's an heir of heav'n who finds
His bosom glow with love.

—J. Swain.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

To what does the New Testament claim to furnish the Lord's people?
In what way is this claim related to the lesson which is before us at this time?

What does the Lord expect of his people, wherever they may chance to live?
What is the relationship which the church sustains to the world?
What does the apostle Paul mean when he says that the Scriptures furnish the man of God unto every good work?
In what way are Christians related to the powers that be?

In what spirit should the Lord's people approach the study of the lesson now before us?

The Golden Text

In what general context are the words of this text found?

What is the meaning of the term "sojourner"?

In what sense are the Lord's people "pilgrims"?

To whom and to what do they owe their allegiance, first and foremost?

What does it mean for a child of God to be subject to every ordinance of man?

How should he regard laws and requirements which are not to his liking, so long as they do not contravene that which God requires of him?

What should always be the motive for obeying the laws of the state or nation?

The Christian's Relation to Civil Governments

What do the Scriptures teach with reference to the origin and authority for civil governments?

In what way is Jehovah related to these governments?

Why are human governments needed today?

Why are Christian people not permitted to revolt against the powers that be—anywhere?

Under what kind of circumstances and conditions did Paul urge Christians to obey the powers that be?

Would persecutions have caused him to write otherwise? Give reasons for your answer.

If rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil, how account for persecutions?

What does the Bible teach regarding the question of capital punishment?

What two motives do Christians have for being subject to the powers that be?

The Christian's Obligation to Support the State

Why are the Lord's people under obligation to pay taxes to the government?

In what way are the officials of the government God's ministers?

What is the difference between tribute and custom?

How should Christian people feel about paying their taxes?

Love Is the Perfect Motive for all of Our Relationships

In what sense are the Lord's people to owe no man anything?

Is it wrong for Christians to contract debts?

What should the child of the Lord do if and when he finds that he cannot discharge his obligation as he expected to and wanted to do?

What debt should every Christian always have?

What does this obligation always involve?

Why can't Christians fully pay the debt of love?

How does love for one's neighbor fulfill the law?

Why can't any law cause a loveless man to want to do right?

Lesson XI—March 17, 1968

DEALING WITH WEAK BRETHREN

Lesson Text

Rom. 14: 1-15

1 But him that is weak in faith receive ye, *yet* not for decision of scruples.

2 One man hath faith to eat all things: but he that is weak eateth herbs.

3 Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

4 Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall he made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand.

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eat-

eth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

9 For to this end Christ died and lived *again*, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.

11 For it is written,

As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow,
And every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling.

14 I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Je'-sus, that nothing is un-

clean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."* (Rom. 14: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 14: 16-22.

Daily Bible Readings

March 11.	M.....	General Exhortations (Rom. 12: 9-13)
March 12.	T.....	Humility (Rom. 12: 3-8)
March 13.	W.....	Reconciliation of Brethren (Matt. 18: 15-17)
March 14.	T.....	Bearing One Another's Burdens (Gal. 6: 1-5)
March 15.	F.....	Doing Good to All Men (Gal. 6: 6-10)
March 16.	S.....	Bearing Infirmities of the Weak (Rom. 15: 1-6)
March 17.	S.....	Forgiving One Another (Col. 3: 12-15)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

After discussing at length the Christian attitude toward the weak in chapter 14 of the Book of Romans, Paul says, "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God." (Rom. 15: 1-7.)

When the tale of human experiences can be fully told, the part which was played by love, both human and divine, in bearing the burdens of others, and seeking to relieve the distresses of the weak, will be revealed in all of its shining glory. Any thoughtful observer is all too familiar with the manner in which the strong often domineer the weak, and thereby use the infirmities of the latter as a source of gain.

The existence of the strong as a stumbling-block to the weak is apparent on every side, as any thoughtful observer will readily admit. This, of course, is entirely contrary to the whole spirit and genius of the Christian religion. Those who consider themselves as being strong should try to picture themselves, not as overbearing, but as helping the weak with their infirmities; and even those who think of themselves as being weak, should make it their business to try to bear the burdens of those who are weaker than themselves. (Gal. 6: 1-5.) The kind of attitude which has just been discussed on the part of all the Lord's people would take them a step deeper into the mystery of the atonement, and would reveal to them the glory of suffering love in the ministry of burden-bearing.

The attitude just referred to is based on the principle of love, rather than on that of selfishness. (Matt. 16: 24.) When the Lord's people think of the welfare of others, instead of their own selfish desires, they are in reality benefiting themselves, as well as their fellow men. No one can try to build some one else up, without growing taller himself; and no one can sprinkle the perfume of happiness upon others, without getting some of it on himself. The strong have an obligation toward the weaker brethren; and

they have the example of Christ to show them how they should go about discharging this duty.

The thoughtful reader of today's lesson will readily recognize that all of the Lord's people, both the strong and the weak, have a mutual responsibility toward each other, and this implies that every Christian is under obligation to do what he can in the interest of other brethren, as the opportunity for such service may present itself to him. It frequently happens that the weaker brethren feel that there is nothing which they can do for those who are stronger than they; and, in a similar manner, those who are stronger feel that there is nothing which weaker brethren can do for them: all of which reminds one of the fable of

the lion and the mouse. The lion was accustomed to taking a nap in the sunshine, and the mouse enjoyed running over the lion while the latter was sleeping. That which the mouse was doing annoyed the lion, and so one day the great lion caught the little mouse, and was about to crush it to death with his strong paw. The little mouse begged for mercy, and promised to do what he could for the lion, if and when the latter got into trouble. This greatly amused the lion; for what could a little mouse do to help him! But one day the lion was caught in a rope net which had been set for him; and it was then that the mouse came to the lion's rescue, by gnawing the rope apart, and thereby freeing the mighty king of beasts!

The Golden Text

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The entire verse from which the golden text is taken reads as follows; "But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." One of the great principles of the New Testament, designed for Christian living, is set forth in this passage; and it is for this reason that diligence should be exercised in endeavoring to understand just what Paul is saying. Different translations often enable the reader to get a better view of that which is being said. The verse quoted above is rendered by Williams in these words; "But the man who has misgivings about eating, if he then eats, has already condemned himself by so doing, because he did not follow his faith, and any action that does not follow one's faith is a sin." *Living Letters*: "But any one who feels it is wrong shouldn't do it. He sins if he does, for he thinks it is wrong; and so for him it is wrong. Anything that's done apart from faith is sin." *The New English Bible*: "But a man who has doubts is guilty if he eats, because his action does not arise from his conviction, and anything which does not arise from conviction is sin."

The "faith" about which Paul is speaking in the passage now under consideration, that is, the golden text, is not faith in the gospel or in Christ, but conviction or confidence in the righteousness of correctness

of that which we do with reference to matters of indifference, or, which is the same thing, matters which are not required as acts of obedience. In his *Exegetical and Analytical Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, I. B. Grubbs says, "The statement 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' was quoted by Augustine as having reference to faith in the gospel—to faith as a fundamental principle and element of Christian life, and this mistake has been repeated in a vast number of instances. It is found in commentaries, sermons, tracts, disquisitions, etc. That it is an error, however, is perfectly clear from a mere glance at the context. 'He that doubts is condemned if he eat.' Surely the doubt, the lack of faith in this case is not a doubt or lack of faith as to the gospel, or the truth as it is in Jesus, but simply and alone a distrust or doubt as to the religious propriety or rightfulness of the doubter's own act."

The words which serve as the golden text for today's lesson may be regarded as an epitome of Paul's teaching on the subject of dealing with weak brethren; and that is precisely what a golden text should be. Any one who carefully considers that which the apostle to the Gentiles says on the question, both in this lesson and elsewhere, will easily see that his sympathies are with the strong; but he always

charged them to deal gently and charitably with the weak. He continuously keeps reminding the strong that the weak can easily be overthrown, if they are encouraged to engage in a freedom which their conscience does not sanction. Christian conduct, regardless of who

may be involved, should always be based on that which is right, or at least on what the individual conceives as being right; but the strong do not always have to claim their rights, especially with reference to those things which are not required as acts of obedience.

The Text Explained

Concerning Conscientious Differences of Opinion

(Rom. 14: 1-6)

But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples. One man hath faith to eat all things; but he that is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth set at nought him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Reference will be made later in this study to some similar teaching regarding the weak, in First Corinthians, but it should be observed that the emphasis on that which is said in the two epistles is not on the same point. In the First Corinthian letter, Paul taught those brethren that they should not eat meat under circumstances which might cause weaker brethren to eat things sacrificed to idols, without realizing that the idol was nothing in God's sight. But in the Roman letter, the idea appears to be a difference between the Jews who, while accepting Christianity, had not given up their adherence to the law of Moses. These brethren still refused to eat meat which they considered unclean (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 3-5.), and kept certain days which had never been observed by the Gentiles; and they evidently condemned the latter for not doing as they did. The Gentiles, of course, looked upon these requirements as

being without foundation, so far as obedience to God was concerned.

Both the Jews and the Gentiles who accepted the gospel of Christ believed that which was taught regarding their salvation from sin (Rom. 1: 16, 17); but they did not have the same understanding with reference to certain questions of propriety concerning indifferent matters. The "weak in faith" were not those who were faltering with reference to their belief in Jesus and the fundamentals of the gospel, but rather to those who were overscrupulous about eating certain meats, or observing certain days, as sacred. The strong were those who had no scruples regarding either of them. The same characteristics are in evidence today, with reference to many things; and it is for that reason that the principles now under consideration are applicable for our time.

The writer of the Book of Romans, in the closing paragraph of chapter 13, mentioned the nearness of salvation, and issued a ringing call to vigorous living on the part of the Lord's people. But not every child of God is strong enough for such an all-out effort; and that means that consideration must be made for those who cannot keep abreast with the strong. This is the force of the term "But" with which the lesson text begins.

The leaders in the Restoration Movement recognized the fact that there are questions among the Lord's people about matters which, in and of themselves, are indifferent, or, which is the same thing, matters which are not essential to obedience to the fundamental truth of the gospel. In one of their slogans they said, "In faith, unity; in opinion and method, liberty; in all things, charity." If brethren today would only distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, and would manifest the proper attitude toward

each, many heartaches and unpleasant situations would be avoided. But when the weak demand that all others treat non-essentials as if they were necessary to acceptance with the Lord; and when the strong ignore the weak in their conscientious attitude toward things which are in reality indifferent, trouble is bound to follow.

The slogan just referred to marked the difference between essentials and opinions, made it clear that whatever is taught in the Scriptures, either by expressed command or by approved example, along with a necessary inference, is a matter of faith, and therefore essential; but that whatever was not so taught belongs to the realm of human opinion, and that every one is free to exercise his own judgments with reference to such matters. This view makes it possible for the church to have a divine standard which is eternally fixed, while at the same time recognizing a realm in which matters of indifference may be regulated in the light of the ever-changing and progressive conditions under which we live.

The two issues which Paul raised in discussing the attitude of the strong toward the weak, and the corresponding attitude of the weak toward the strong, were the eating of certain foods and the observance of certain days, neither of which was regulated by the positive teaching of the Scriptures. The solution which the apostle proposed falls into three stages, namely, (1) Each person must be fully satisfied in his own mind that his attitude and conduct are right. Or, to state the same thing in another way, each man must maintain a clear conscience; for vague suspicions are no substitute for a clear understanding of the issues in question. (2) Each individual is under a restraint, that is, each person must refrain from judging, and must not be quick to condemn those who differ from him. (3) The positive teaching which requires that the strong not place a temptation in the way of the weak. The Lord is the Master of both; and it is to him that each one must stand? fall. And furthermore, the Lord is able to make both the strong and the weak to stand, provided their opinions do not interfere with their

faith and required obedience, and are not forced upon others.

Christianity Provides for No Moral or Spiritual Isolation

(Rom. 14: 7-12)

For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God.

For it is written,

As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow,

And every tongue shall confess to God.

So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God.

If one is not careful in his analysis of the section of the lesson text now before us, he is likely to consider Paul's aim as showing that all of the Lord's people are obligated to each other, which, of course, they are; but the particular point which the apostle was stressing is the fact that all followers of Christ are *his* people. They are his by right of redemption and the price which he paid for their redemption. (Acts 20: 28; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20; 7: 23; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19.) But if we are the Lord's people, we are, by virtue of that relationship, members one of another. (Rom. 12: 5; Eph. 4: 25.) This not only affects our relationship with others in the body of Christ; it also makes us aware of the truth that we cannot govern our own lives in accordance with the dictates of our own interests.

The relationship which we sustain to the Lord is so broad and comprehensive, as to include both the living and the dead: and the apostle emphasizes the fact that there is no ground, whatsoever, for our judging one another with reference to the questions now under consideration. And so he asks, "But thou [O weak one], why dost thou judge [condemn] thy brother? or thou again [O strong one], why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before

the judgment-seat of God." The quotation from Isaiah 45: 23 was cited by Paul in order to show that he was speaking according to the teaching of the Scriptures. The Lord therefore will do the judging, and that means, of course, that the prerogative does not belong to his people. (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

There is nothing more clearly taught in the Bible than that judgment, in the final analysis, belongs to the Lord. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall each man have his praise from God." (1 Cor. 4: 3-5.) There can be no more dreadful deterrent, to the person who stops to think, from the sin of unauthorized judging, than the truth regarding a final judgment by the Lord.

The Strong Must Practice the Law of Love toward the Weak

(Rom. 14: 13-15)

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling. I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died.

In the first part of the chapter from which the lesson text is taken Paul dwells upon the need for mutual tolerance, namely, the strong must not despise the weak, and the weak must not censure the strong. But that is only the beginning of a satisfactory solution which is created by "indifferent things," or, which is the same thing, those things which do not fall into the category of gospel obedience. It is in this field of "things" that Paul warns against judging, that is, in the field

of things which are not required as gospel obedience; or, which is the same thing, things which are, in and of themselves, neither required nor prohibited.

There are some things which Christians are required to judge, as, for example, Jesus says, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." (John 7: 24.) There are many things which come before the Lord's people concerning which they must render judgment; but that judgment must always be based on the principle of righteousness, if the Lord is to be pleased. For example, (1) If one is to beware of false prophets, or preachers (Matt: 7: 15-20), he must judge as to which are false and which are genuine. The same things are true of evil workers (Phil. 3: 2). (2) No one can mark them who are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling (Rom. 16: 17, 18), without judging; and neither can the Lord's people withdraw fellowship from the disorderly (2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15), without first judging as to who fits into that class of individuals.

But the question that Paul is concerned with here is this: "But judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling." This, in effect, is passing judgment on one's own thoughts and actions. And in saying, "I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean," the apostle was pointing out to his readers that the legal distinctions of the law of Moses were no longer binding. (See Acts 10: 9-16; 1 Tim. 4: 3-5.) This truth, however, has not been realized by some of the Lord's people, namely, the *weak* of this lesson; and if they should be led to eat meat which they considered to be unclean, it would be unclean, and therefore a sin, to them. No one should ever be encouraged to do anything against his own conscientious convictions. Teach him first, and then encourage him to act in the light of the truth which he has been led to see.

"For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died." This is the

consideration which Paul urges the strong to show for the weak. It is true that the weak may not deserve this respect, and certainly the weak cannot impose their scruples as the standard of conduct for others; but the strong, in keeping with the law of love, must be willing to show patience to and consideration for the ones who have not seen the truth as they see it. Recklessness as to the safety and welfare of others will not be permitted by the law of love. No one's stomach is ever as great, and as important, as another's soul.

There is no better commentary on the thought of this section of the lesson text, than 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13.

But it must be remembered that the reference is to things which are neither right nor wrong within themselves; and no one has the right to extend the principle which Paul sets forth beyond them. When people learn that which the Lord requires of them, they must be obedient thereto, regardless of what others may think about it, or be offended by it. (James 4: 17.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what way did Paul enforce his teaching, regarding the strong helping the weak?

What attitude do many strong people manifest toward the weak?

What principle must motivate the proper attitude of the strong toward the weak?

What mutual responsibility do the strong and the weak have toward each other?

The Golden Text

What great principle is set forth in the words of the golden text and its immediate context?

What "faith" does Paul have under consideration?

What mistake has been and is still being made regarding it?

What can you say regarding the appropriateness of the golden text for today's lesson?

Why should this question be studied and discussed often?

Concerning Conscientious Differences of Opinion

Compare Paul's teaching regarding the weak in the Roman and First Corinthian letters.

What two different points did he emphasize?

Who were the "weak in faith"?

In what way is the same teaching applicable in our day?

Why did Paul probably discuss consideration for the weak at this place in his epistle?

What is the force of "But" with which chapter 14 begins?

What application did the leaders of the

Restoration Movement make of the principle set forth here?

What solution did Paul propose for settling the differences between the strong and the weak?

Christianity Provides for No Moral or Spiritual Isolation

What particular point did Paul apparently intend to point out in this section of the text?

Why do all Christian people belong to Christ?

What relationship therefore do they sustain to each other?

What important lesson should we learn here?

Why, then, is it wrong for the Lord's people to judge each other?

What great lesson should we learn regarding the question of the judgment?

The Strong Must Practice the Law of Love toward the Weak

How did Paul begin his discussion of the relationship of the weak and the strong?

Why is that alone not a satisfactory solution to the problem now under consideration?

Is the Christian required to abstain for all judging? Give reason for your answer.

What are some of the things concerning which he must judge?

What judging does Paul require in the lesson now before us?

In what sense does Paul say that all things are clean within themselves?

What should the strong never encourage the weak to do and why?

What consideration, then, should the strong show the weak?

In what field alone does this principle apply?

What must all people do with reference to the things which God requires of them and why?

Lesson XII—March 24, 1968

PAUL'S MINISTRY

Lesson Text

Rom. 15: 15-28

15 But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God,

16 That I should be a minister of Christ Je'-sus unto the Gen'-tiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gen'-tiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

17 I have therefore my glorying in Christ Je'-sus in things pertaining to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gen'-tiles, by word and deed,

19 In the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Je-ru'-sa-lem, and round about even unto Il-lyr'-i-cum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ;

20 Yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation;

21 But, as it is written,

They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
And they who have not heard shall understand.

22 Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you:

23 But now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you,

24 Whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company)—

25 But now, *I say*, I go unto Je-ru'-sa-lem, ministering unto the saints.

26 For it hath been the good pleasure of Mac-e-do'-ni-a and A-cha'-ia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Je-ru'-sa-lem.

27 Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gen'-tiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to *them* also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."* (Rom. 12: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 15: 29-33.

Daily Bible Readings

March 18.	M.....	Paul's Sense of Obligation (Rom. 1: 13-17)
March 19.	T.....	Preaching and Salvation (1 Cor. 1: 18-21)
March 20.	W.....	Not in Words of Man's Wisdom (1 Cor. 2: 1-5)
March 21.	T.....	Preach the Word (2 Tim. 4: 1-18)
March 22.	F.....	Ministers of Christ (2 Cor. 4: 1-5)
March 23.	S.....	Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20)
March 24.	S.....	Paul's Divine Commission (Acts 9: 15-19)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

Christianity, at the time of Paul's conversion, was limited almost entirely to the Jewish race; but when the time came for him to make the supreme sacrifice, and go to be with

Jesus, it was a world-wide religion. There were indeed others who preached the gospel to the Gentile nations, but their work is almost lost sight of in the brighter glory of

Paul's achievements; for it was through his powerful leadership that the early Christian movement developed into an international brotherhood. All of this was true, because Paul was a man of extraordinary vigor and originality; and his emancipation from the narrow limits of Judaism released his powers and gave them a world-wide scope. His tireless 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 in the minds of his Christian contemporaries the classic figure of the Christian missionary.

Always a student, but never a recluse, the apostle Paul shared to the full the common life of the non-exclusive early church. He did not "dwell apart," as that expression is commonly understood; he was always conscious that his innermost life was "hid with Christ in God." And not only did his life move with the church's life, but it was brought into close touch with almost every possible human experience, except that of the purely domestic, to a degree rarely equalled by any other man. Who else but a person with the spirit of Paul could say, "For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might

gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof." (1 Cor. 9: 19-23.)

There were two major factors which contributed to the remarkable success which attended Paul's labors, namely, the universal message which he had to proclaim (Mark 16: 15; Rom. 1: 16), and the breadth and strength of personality with which he interpreted that message. He saw and served the needs of the Gentile mission more than any other man, so much so that he was known as the "apostle of Gentiles." (Rom. 11: 13; cf. Gal. 2: 8.) It was primarily through the efforts of Paul that the gospel was carried to Cyprus, Galatia, Macedonia, Greece, Asia, and many other centers of the Roman world. He was eloquent in his preaching, heroic in facing dangers, strong in his faith; and he finally sealed his teaching with his own blood. The original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus was Jewish, but Paul interpreted and enlarged its significance. In the Greek language, and in the thought forms of that culture, he pictured Christ as the crucified revealer of God's love, risen to the right hand of the Father, sitting on his throne, acting as mediator between God and man, dwelling in his people through the Holy Spirit, and raising them with him into a divine life with the Father. This was the way of salvation for which men and women were looking; and it was through Paul's preaching of the eternal good news that all classes of people were able to lay hold upon the promised Redeemer, to rise with him into newness of life, and to look eagerly for a fuller revelation of God in human affairs.

The Golden Text

"In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." The twelfth chapter of Romans has been called *The Little Bible*; and while it may not be the greatest chapter in the Holy Scriptures, it is certainly one of the most valuable: for it is full of counsel and precepts for every day living. It has an impressive beginning, and a triumphant

close; and there is a multi-linked chain of counsel, admonition, and exhortation in between. The verse which serves as the golden text for today is itself a short summary of the Christian life. The life of the child of God has three relationships, namely, (1) to the world around us, (2) to our hearts within us; and (3) to Christ above us; and it is easy to

see that we have a word regarding each in the text now under consideration.

"In diligence not slothful." The diligence referred to here does not apply merely to a section of one's life, but to the whole; and the reference is not so much to the work, as to the worker. (Cf. Eccles. 9: 10.) It describes the manner in which our work should be done: "As for diligence in doing our duty, let us not be slothful—let us really do it diligently." The injunction here is a protest against indolence in Christian conduct, in any area of one's life. Many are diligent in business or pleasure, but slothful in religious duties. It is more tragic for a Christian worker to be drowsy at his task, than for a sentinel or watchman to fall asleep while on duty.

"Fervent in spirit." Here we pass from the outward activity of life to the inward spring or motive power, out of which the outward activity must flow; and without which it is almost certain to fail. The term "fervent" means to be glowing or

boiling like water. This should be our attitude toward both God and man. It requires boiling water to produce steam, and steam drives the piston rods of the mighty power-houses of our national life. To be fervent in spirit is to be filled with enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is indispensable to success in any worthy endeavor.

"Serving the Lord." This is the supreme motive of the Christian life. (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) Every child of God should endeavor to be more than merely a "church member." (Matt. 7: 21; 1 Cor. 15: 50.) The expression "serving the Lord" means, according to Thayer, to obey his commandments and render to him the service which is due him. (Matt. 28: 18-20; Luke 17: 10.) But it is impossible to serve the Lord acceptably, without doing our duty toward our fellow men. (Matt. 25: 31 ff.) No one who sincerely endeavors to carry out the great commission which Christ gave to his disciples, will fail in his duty to either God or man, to any significant extent.

The Text Explained

Paul's Aim in Writing; and the Result of His Ministry

(Rom. 15: 15-21)

But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. 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; yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written,

*They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
And they who have not heard shall understand.*

After finishing the doctrinal portion of the epistle to the Romans, Paul devotes most of chapters 12, 13, 14, and the first thirteen verses of chapter 15, to exhortations. Verse 14 of chapter 15 begins what may very properly be called the epilogue of the letter. If one should look at chapter 14 alone, he might reach the conclusion that Paul considered the Roman brethren quite defective either in intelligence or love, or in both: but as he begins the epilogue, he disclaims any such inference from that which went before. Verse 14 says, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." This implies that he was fully convinced that they were both upright and fully prepared to build each other up. This was evidently the apostle's estimate of the church as a whole, as may be gathered from the list of names which he cited in chapter 16.

It is always in the interest of progress and good will for preachers and teachers to encourage their hearers, when it is possible for them to do so. It is often the case that teaching is placed on the critical level, which means that those who are the recipients of the instruction are put on the defensive. This, of course, is sometimes necessary; and one has only to read Second Corinthians, in order to see how well Paul could show the brethren their faults. But in writing to the Roman brethren, the apostle was addressing a group of Christians who, apparently for the most part, were in a state of spiritual vigor and maturity. And it is also possible, as Moule points out, that Paul expressed this conviction the more strongly, because he was writing to the church in the Imperial Metropolis, the mighty center of influence.

But Paul's principal reason for writing more boldly was due to the commission which he had received from the Lord to preach to the Gentiles. He frequently speaks of his assignment as the grace which was bestowed upon him. (1 Cor. 3: 10; 15: 9, 10; Gal. 2: 9; Eph. 3: 7, 8.) We should not think that Paul meant to leave the impression on the Roman brethren that they already knew all the things about which he had written to them, when he told them that he was putting them again in remembrance; for it is exceedingly doubtful if they were familiar with many of the great doctrinal issues which he discussed. But they did doubtless know much of that which was hortatory. Any teacher of God's word should always strive to make known the divine will to others; and then endeavor to keep them constantly reminded of the things which they have been taught. (2 Pet. 1: 12-15.)

In verse 16 Paul figuratively compares himself to a priest, as he presents an offering to God. The original word for "minister" is not the usual *diakonos* (Eph. 3: 7), which means servant, but *leitourgos*, which denotes a governmental, that is, a public, servant (Rom. 13: 6) or a priest (Heb. 8: 2). The word for "ministering" (*ieronrgeō*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and it is defined by Thayer, Arndt-

Gingrich, and other Greek scholars to mean to be busied with sacred things, to minister in the manner of a priest, to perform holy service. The marginal reading is *ministering in sacrifice*. The original for "offering up" is *prosphora*, and means that which is brought as an offering.

Thus, the apostle Paul pictured himself as being engaged in the sacred ministry of a priest, as he brought his offering of the Gentiles whom he had converted to God; and they were made acceptable to him by being sanctified, that is, consecrated or set apart, by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspired the message by which they were converted (Acts 2: 4), and inasmuch as the Holy Spirit dwells only in sanctified temples and places of worship, his presence in the Gentiles was equivalent to their sanctification. Alford quotes Theophylact as saying of Paul, "This is my priesthood, to preach the gospel. My knife is the word, ye are the sacrifice."

Paul had been preaching approximately twenty-five years when he wrote the epistle to the Romans; and during that time he had so completely covered the world of the Romans, as to be able to say, "From Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." If one will consult a map of that part of the world, he can easily see what a vast territory the apostle covered. Illyricum was northwest of Macedonia. Furthermore, the work which Paul had done in evangelizing that vast area left no place where his services were then needed; and some four years later, he wrote the Colossian brethren to the effect that the gospel had been preached in all creation under heaven. (Col. 1: 23.) If Paul's plans and methods were followed today, with all the modern means of communication, it staggers the imagination as we endeavor to conceive of the results which would be accomplished. It is doubtful if the zeal which Paul manifested during the years he was actively engaged in gospel preaching has ever been equalled; and it is almost certain that it has never been surpassed. Paul's one aim was to preach the gospel where it had never been heard before.

The Hopes and Plans of Paul
Made a Visit to Rome Seem
Nearer

(Rom. 15: 22-24)

Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: but now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you, whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company)—

While Paul was in Corinth, from which place the Roman letter was written, his desire to see Rome very probably increased; and it is also very probable that ships were leaving the western port of Lechaeum (Corinth had two harbors, Cenchreae, on the east, for ships to and from Asia; and Lechaeum, on the west, for ships to and from Italy) at frequent intervals for the world-capital. And inasmuch as the apostle had hopes of going on to Spain with the gospel, it is most likely that he often looked out over the gulf of Corinth, which led out into the Adriatic sea, between Corinth and Italy; and as he looked in that direction, he must have thought of the possibilities for Christianity in the far west.

The part of the Roman letter which we are considering today reveals something of the magnitude of Paul's plans. The journey concerning which he spoke so simply, namely, from Corinth to Jerusalem, and then back to Rome, and on to Spain, was a journey of at least four thousand miles; and, considering the slowness of travel in those days, the trip was more elaborate and extended than a modern trip around the world. But Paul's interest in Spain shows how well informed he was regarding conditions in the western part of the empire. During the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, Spain had probably been developed faster than any other part of the Roman world. It had been colonized by Roman veterans; and, for half a century, Roman engineers had been improving it. And, too, Paul must have known that there was a Greek population there; and that they were ready for the gospel.

It is also quite possible that books written in Latin were beginning to pass into the hands of men from that province. The writings of men who were born in Spain, such as Seneca, Martial, and Quintilian, were to be the most impressive in Roman literature for the next century and a half.

Spain, in many ways, was the new world of that day; and Paul, in some way, had learned of its missionary possibilities, and had resolved to take advantage of them. It is possible that he had met some Greeks from Spain in his numerous travels, and that he had, in that way, been led to the conviction that that country should be the field of his next missionary endeavor. But in thinking of Spain, Paul also thought of Rome, the capital of the world, which was located on the way which he would travel in going to the western frontier. The apostle knew that there was a well known and influential church in Rome, perhaps several congregations; and he was determined to reach those brethren, and save them from the devastating influence of Judaizing teachers, who had wrought such havoc in Corinth and Galatia; and who, if they had not already made their plans, would be almost certain to include the Imperial City in their field of activity.

Not only was Paul a great gospel preacher; he also well understood the art of diplomacy, as may be seen by considering his tactful remark in the parenthesis of verse 24. Instead of leaving the impression that he thought it would be a great honor to them to have an apostle in their midst, he wanted the Roman brethren to feel that they were doing him a favor by sharing their Christian experience with him. Almost every one likes to feel that he is appreciated; and if elders, preachers, and other church leaders would learn this lesson, and put it into practice, the favorable response from those whom they try to influence would be much greater. The expression "in some measure," in the parenthesis already referred to, probably implies that he was only planning a short visit with them.

But There Was Other Work to Be
Done before Going to Rome
(Rom. 15: 25-28)

But now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it also to them to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain.

As Paul thought on the prospects of his proposed labors in Spain, and the blessings of a visit with the Roman brethren, he realized that there was one thing which made an early trip to those places impossible, namely, the journey to Jerusalem with the money which some of the Gentile churches had collected for the poor among the Christians in that area. For many months Paul, along with other faithful brethren, had been urging some of the Gentile Christians to take up a collection for the needy saints in Judaea. Many of the early Jewish brethren in the homeland had never been entirely satisfied with the manner in which Paul and his co-laborers had offered the gospel to the Gentiles; and the growing strength of the Gentile churches appeared only to increase their suspicion.

However, it had long been Paul's conviction that this feeling of resentment, on the part of the Jewish brethren, could be allayed, in a large measure at least, by getting the Gentile brethren to supply funds to relieve the needs of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and the immediate area surrounding the metropolis. And as Paul was wont to do, as the text now under consideration plainly shows, he presented the matter so that both the Jewish and Gentile brethren were made to feel that each was simply discharging an obligation which was due the other, as indeed was the case. One of the great needs today among the

Lord's people is that of proper motivation; for, when people are made to realize the reason why something should be done, and are made to see that that is what the Lord expects of them, it is much easier to get them to respond to whatever is being urged upon them. But when people are permitted to think that there is no great importance attached to that which they are called upon to do, their interest in the proposition will not be very great.

But the clearest evidence of the importance which Paul attached to the collection which was made for the needy saints in Jerusalem and its environs, was the fact that he deferred his trip to Rome and Spain, in order to go in person with the chosen messengers, who were selected to carry the money to those for whom it was intended. (1 Cor. 16: 1-4.) This can only mean that the apostle felt that the success of his effort to bring about a better feeling on the part of the Jewish brethren, who had questioned his work among the Gentiles, would depend upon the interpretation which the bearers put upon the gift when it was delivered in Jerusalem—whether it was just so much cash received, or whether it was a great symbol of fraternal fellowship from the Gentile Christians in other provinces of the Roman Empire. If the wrong interpretation had been placed upon the gift, it certainly would have failed in its conciliatory purpose. This is a lesson which should be well learned, and faithfully put into practice today; for it is always true, as Lowell so aptly says,

Not what we give, but what we share,—

For the gift without the giver is bare.

Clement, whom Conybeare and Howson identify with the Clement of Philippians 4: 3, says that Paul went to the "extremity of the West" before his martyrdom; and inasmuch as Roman writers often used that expression to denote Spain, it is fair to conclude that Paul did realize his ambition to preach the gospel in Spain, before he went to be with Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What difference in the application of Christianity was seen during Paul's ministry?

In what way did he regard his ministry?
What two major factors contributed to his remarkable success?
Where was the principal part of his preaching done?
How did he picture Christ as he proclaimed him to the people?

The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?
What are the principal thoughts which they set forth?
What will one always be doing, if he follows the admonition of the golden text for today?

Paul's Aim in Writing and the Result of His Ministry

What is the nature of the portion of Romans from which the lesson text for today is taken?
If one should read chapter 14 alone, what idea would he likely get?
How do we know that Paul did not feel that way about the Roman brethren?
Why is it always a good idea to encourage people when it is possible to do so?
Why are some preachers and teachers so often critical of their hearers?
Why did Paul write more boldly unto the Roman brethren?
What is the value of calling people's attention to that which they have been taught?
Under what figure did Paul liken his ministry?
In what way were those who were converted to him made acceptable to God?

How thoroughly did Paul cover the territory where he preached?

The Hopes and Plans of Paul Made a Visit to Rome Seem Nearer

What probably caused Paul to think of visiting Rome about the time he wrote Romans?
What do we know of the magnitude of his plans at that time?
Why would the apostle be so interested in going to Spain, rather than somewhere else?
Why would Paul think of Rome in connection with his proposed visit to Spain?
In what way did he display the art of diplomacy when he wrote to the Romans?
What important lesson should we learn from this?

But There Was Other Work to Be Done before Going to Rome

What was the work which Paul had to do before visiting the Roman brethren?
Why did the apostle want such a collection taken in the first place?
How did he endeavor to make the Jewish and Gentile brethren feel regarding the matter?
Why is the question of motivation so important in the Christian life?
Why, then, is this issue so often overlooked?
In what way did Paul give evidence that he considered the collection of great importance?
How did he come to be included in the company which took the gift to Jerusalem?
Why was the need for the proper interpretation of it so great?
What evidence do we have that Paul probably realized his desire to preach in Spain?

Lesson XIII—March 31, 1968

CLOSING ADMONITIONS

Lesson Text

Rom. 16: 16-20, 25-27

16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoice therefore over you: but I would have you

wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Je-sus Christ be with you.

25 Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Je-sus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal,

26 But now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, ac-

cording to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith:

27 To the only wise God, through Je'-sus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. A-men'.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."* (Rom. 15: 33.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Rom. 16: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

March 25. M.....	Salutation to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16: 13-24)
March 26. T.....	Salutations to the Colossians (Col. 4: 10-17)
March 27. W.....	Greetings to Brethren (2 Tim. 4: 9-21)
March 28. T.....	Greetings by Peter (1 Pet. 5: 12-14)
March 29. F.....	Greetings by John (2 John 1-12)
March 30. S.....	Salutation to Friends (3 John 13, 14)
March 31. S.....	Exhorting One Another (Heb. 3: 12-19)

TIME.—A.D. 58.

PLACE.—Romans was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Roman Christians.

Introduction

The basic meaning of "admonish" is to caution, advise, or counsel against something, which may be done in either a kind and gentle manner, or in a more drastic and severe way. It is a necessary ingredient of the over-all work of discipline, that is, the effective training, drilling, or education, which is so essential to acceptance with the Lord. One of the great statements of "church discipline" is that one which is contained in 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17, namely, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." No average person is going to be complete without the profitable words of admonition which are spoken by those who have the true interest of the individual to whom they are addressed, at heart.

Some of the admonitions which are contained in the Bible are as follows: (1) "I write not these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children." (1 Cor. 4: 14.) The context plainly shows what the admonitions were. (2) "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess. 5: 12, 13.) The admonition referred to here is clearly that of the elders. (3) "And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly

[cf. 2 Thess. 3: 6ff], encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all." (1 Thess. 5: 14.) This gives some idea of the kind of admonition which the elders are urged to give. (4) "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: 31.) This was an example of Paul's work among the Ephesian brethren, during his long stay among them. (Cf. Col. 1: 28; 2 Thess. 3: 14, 15; Col. 3: 16; Eph. 6: 4.)

The basis of, or the source from which Christian admonition should always come, is the teaching of the Scriptures themselves. "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10: 11, 12.) "But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine: . . . These things are good and profitable unto men. . . . A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned." (Tit. 2: 1; 3: 8, 10, 11.) The wise man of Ecclesiastes notes that "better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knoweth not how to receive admonition any more." (Eccles. 4: 13.) This should certainly be an impressive lesson to all people today; for who is he that is above the need of admonition?

The Golden Text

"Noic the God of peace be with you all. Amen." The words just quoted constituted a benediction for the Roman brethren, following his request for their prayers. The full context reads as follows: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." (Rom. 15: 30-33.)

Paul knew how the Judaizers felt toward him, and the effect which their tactics might have on the Hebrew brethren who were themselves not too fond of the apostle. All of this made him realize that it was altogether possible, if not indeed probable, that prejudice on the part of otherwise faithful brethren could very well cause them to reject the gift which he and others were about to take to them. And if that should

be done, he knew that the whole effort for which he and others had labored so long would be brought to failure.

The apostle's whole purpose in writing the epistle to the Romans was to bring about peace between the Jewish and Gentile Christians; and so, if he could get the Roman brethren to join with him in prayer for the success of the visible effort he was making, that would be a great factor in the ultimate outcome; for, as Tennyson notes, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," and in the words of James, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." (James 5: 16.)

Furthermore, no one can pray for another person, as he should, and the cause which he espouses, without having an interest in both; and if Paul could be successful in his mission to the Jerusalem saints, he would then be able to feel that he could go on to Rome "in joy through the will of God," and together with his brethren there find rest. It was toward that end that he himself also prayed.

The Text Explained

Some Salutations and a Grave Warning

(Rom. 16: 16-18)

Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ salute you. The reference to a "holy kiss" is found several times in the New Testament; and the implication is that the custom was widely practiced in those days. (1 Cor. 16: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 12; 1 Thess 5: 26; and as a "kiss of love," 1 Pet. 5: 14.) After reading all that which is contained in the Word of the Lord on the subject, it is worthy of notice that no Christian was ever commanded to greet any one with merely a kiss. The emphasis in all of the passages which have been cited is not upon the "kiss," per se, but upon the *kind* of kiss. A. T. Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*), in commenting on the passage now before us, says, "The near-east mode of salutation as hand-shaking in the Western. In China one shakes hands with him-

self. Men kissed men and women kissed women."

With the kind of practice just mentioned in vogue, it was in keeping with the high principles of Christianity for the apostles of Christ, in writing to the brethren, to urge them to make the kiss a holy one, or, as Peter has it, a kiss of love. The apostolic aim was to encourage Christian people to see to it that their greetings were characterized by sincerity. The Lord does not require his people to perpetuate, or even to adhere to, a purely human custom: but he does require sincerity in whatever they do. If handshaking had been the custom of that day, the apostles doubtless would have said, "Salute the brethren with a holy handshake," or "a handshake of love."

In the expression, "All the churches of Christ salute you," the term "churches" is evidently used in the sense of congregations in various sections of the country. A similar use of the term is found in 1

Corinthians 11: 16, namely, "the churches of God." There were churches (congregations) in Galatia (Gal. 1: 2); in Asia (Rev. 1: 4; cf. Col. 4: 13, 16); and in many other parts of the Roman world at that time. When Jesus promised to build his church (Matt. 16: 18), he referred to it as "my church"; and Paul told the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 28); that the Lord purchased the church "with his own blood." And inasmuch as Christ built the church, and paid for it with his own blood, it certainly belongs to him; and when the apostle Paul used the expression now under consideration, he was calling attention to the relationship which the churches sustain to Christ. The same principle is also applicable, when the Lord's people are considered as a whole, that is, the "church of Christ" is equivalent to the "body of Christ," that is, the body of saved people who belong to him, because they were redeemed by him. It is possible, of course, to employ the expression "church of Christ" in a sectarian sense, as some of the Corinthian brethren evidently did.

Some Bible students have objected to the use of the term "all" at the beginning of the expression now under consideration, on the ground that Paul could not have extended his authority to the point that he could actually speak for every congregation. But as *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Alford, and others point out, the church in Rome was widely and favorably known (Rom. 1:8). and it could be expected that churches everywhere would have sufficient interest in those brethren to ratify the courtesy which Paul was here expressing. J. W. Shepherd, in commenting on this passage, says, "Paul was in communion with most of the churches; all such would feel interested in the believers in Rome; and if, as is probable, his intention of going there was known, how natural that these churches should ask to be remembered to the brethren there! As he knew so well the believers at Home, which he had not visited, how well qualified he was to speak for the many churches of Christ which he himself had planted." (Matt. 3: 5, 6; Luke 7: 29, 30 for the use of the term "all.")

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.

Two of the prominent New Testament words for "divisions" are *di-chostasiai* (Rom. 16: 17; Gal. 5: 20) and *schismata* (1 Cor. 1: 10, 11: 18); but insofar as their practical meaning and application are concerned, there does not seem to be any great difference between them. The term "factions" (*haireseis*) is used in connection with both of the words just cited (Gal. 5: 20; 1 Cor. 11: 18, 19); and there is obviously a difference between *haireseis* and the other two words. "Divisions" result from the state of one's mind, or, which is the same thing, his attitudes and desires; while "factions" are more pronounced or deep-rooted, and are characterized by a deliberate aim to maintain the party differences, or, which is the same thing, the heretical distinctions. Our word "heresy" is derived from the Greek *hairesis*, and it is deliberately chosen religious opinion which is opposed to the authorized doctrine of inspired writers.

When Paul admonished the Roman brethren to "mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them," he was literally urging them to keep their eyes open and be on the lookout for those who were trying to divide the body of Christ, and who were enticing brethren into sin by placing temptation to wrongdoing in their way. The fact that the article is before both divisions and occasions of stumbling in the Greek implies that some well known disturbance, possibly the work of Judaizers, was in the apostle's mind. Paul wanted the Roman brethren to "turn away from," that is, *avoid*, such trouble makers. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 11, where the same original word is found.) Divisions are the forerunners of factions, and if the Lord's people will turn away from, or avoid, the former, they will not be guilty the latter. (2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15.)

The church is the body of Christ

(Eph. 1: 22, 23), and his beloved bride (Rom. 7: 1-4; 2 Cor. 11: 2; Eph. 5: 22-33); and it is certain that any one who divides, or mutilates, the body, or otherwise harms the bride, cannot be a servant of the Lord Christ. The whole aim of such people is to have their own way and serve their own base purpose. It is wholly impossible for one to serve Christ while seeking his own desires. *The Interpreter's Bible* points out that there is something selfish and irreligious in the outlook of the person who seeks to create dissension in Christian fellowship; and inasmuch as he is not seeking the good of all the brethren, he must be intent on promoting his own advantage, and consequently his own lower appetite. This should be an impressive lesson to those people who are willing to divide the church of the Lord, if that must be done before they can have their own way. Christ prayed for those people who mutilated his physical body. (Luke 23: 34.)

Those who seek to divide the body of Christ usually provide specious reasons for doing so: or, which is the same thing, they do not hesitate to put on a false or hypocritical front, in an effort to deceive the unsuspecting. They want to appear attractive and sincere, but that, of course, is the exact reverse of their character. Those people who want to do right naturally recoil from that which they consider to be evil and without principle; and it ever remains true that the tribute which vice attempts to pay virtue is as much the blurring of its own insight, it is the hoodwinking of its neighbor's perception. But those who are bent upon having their own way with reference to the body of Christ usually learn the art of offering false, but specious, reasons for that which they do.

While it is clear that the aim of the aggressor is to deceive the innocent, we must not forget the fact that the latter is not without responsibility; for it is a fact worthy of notice that the writers of the New Testament nowhere commend the simple-mindedness of those who are merely gullible. This is exactly why the apostle admonishes his readers to mark, that is, keep their eyes open and be on the lookout for

those who are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which they had learned. The Lord expects his people to be alert to that which is happening, shrewd to assess the forces which are at work, and quick to support the good and resist the evil; and if this is done, the seemingly fair outward forms of wickedness will not mislead the faithful children of God. (Matt. 10: 16.)

God Will Care for His Obedient Children

(Rom. 16: 19, 20)

For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoyce therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

Paul's statement regarding the obedience of the Roman brethren indicates that they had an accurate understanding of the demands of the Christian faith, and that they had complied with all of those demands. This, of course, implies that they were capable, at least through their leaders, of judging as to the righteousness of any teaching which was brought into their midst. (Cf. 1 John 4: 1; Rev. 2: 2.) No child of God has done his best to please the Lord, until he has made a sincere effort to learn and to do everything which has been authorized for him. (Matt. 28: 20; Acts 2: 42.) Such preparation on the part of the Lord's people will enable them to be "wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil." The term "simple" literally means to be *pure and innocent*. (Heb. 5: 14.)

The apostle Paul assured his brethren in Rome that if they remained faithful to the Lord, that the God of peace, not of division (1 Cor. 14: 33), would soon crush the leader of the opposition, that is, Satan, under their feet; or, which is the same thing, the God of peace can and will overcome the leader (Satan) of division; and he will therefore deliver his trusting people from such satanic influence. This is precisely what John taught about such matters, namely, "Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he

that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4.)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

This is, as all Bible students know, a favorite benediction of the apostle Paul. It is found, in one form or another, in all of his epistles which have come down to us. In penning this benediction, Paul sometimes used fewer words than he did here, and sometimes he expanded and embellished it; but in one form or another, he always gave an epitome of all that Jesus means to his people and does for them. Paul's prayer for those to whom he wrote, and the same is always true of all who read and follow his teaching, was and is that they may consciously be surrounded by "the winning constraint in which attractiveness and transforming power are so amazingly combined," and which always has its source in Jesus Christ.

The Final Doxology

(Rom. 16: 25-27)

Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith: to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

There is a sense, or so it seems, in which the Epistle to the Romans is the greatest document which the apostle Paul ever penned. It is, indeed, as far-reaching in its aim, as Ephesians is in its profoundness; and it was altogether fitting that the letter should be brought to a close with such a fitting climax. And if one will look carefully, he will be able to see that many of the leading ideas and lessons of the epistle are brought together in the doxology; and it was therefore with deep gratitude that Paul could recall what Jehovah can and does do for his people. The lost are saved, the weak are made strong, and the unstable are established; and when new creatures (2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2:

10; Tit. 3: 5, 6; Rom. 6: 3, 4) are brought into the kingdom of Christ, it is always according to the divine method which the God of the universe has supplied. In fact, the apostle emphasizes throughout the letter that the only way in which men can be redeemed and brought into a new way of living, is by conforming to his purpose; and when they understand what his will and purpose are, they are assured of his power which can and does work in and through them. (Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

The gospel which Paul preached was Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2: 2), and that was in keeping with the revelation of the mystery, which had been kept in silence (Eph. 3: 9; Col. 1: 26) from its inception (Gen. 3: 15) until the coming of Christ to make possible the salvation of the human race (Gal. 4: 4, 5; Mark 1: 14, 15). This gospel was also proclaimed by the prophets (Gal. 3: 8), but was not fully made known until it had been brought to fruition by the death, burial, resurrection, and coronation of Jesus the Christ. This is to say that the gospel was not proclaimed as a fact until Peter delivered his great sermon on the Pentecost of Acts 2. All of this was according to the commandment of God, who ordained that the gospel should be made known unto all nations (Mark 16: 15; Luke 24: 46, 47) unto obedience of faith.

The expression "unto obedience of faith" is literally to lead them to obedience to the faith. The apostle Paul is the most exhaustive writer of the New Testament on the subject of justification by faith; and his most elaborate treatise of the question is found in his letter to the Roman brethren. In view of the emphasis which he placed upon the subject, and the clarity with which he dealt with the issue, it is interesting to observe the fact that he opened and closed the epistle with the expression "obedience of faith." (Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26.)

The marginal reading in each of the instances just cited is unto obedience "to the faith"; while the reading in the Revised Standard Version is "to bring about the obedience of faith." Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*) calls this the subjective genitive, both in

1: 5 and 16: 26, and renders the expression "the obedience which springs from faith." "The faith" is equivalent to the gospel, as may be seen from such passages as Acts 6: 7; Gal. 3: 26, 27. The article precedes "faith" in the original in both of the scriptures cited. The idea which Paul expresses in the passage now under consideration makes impossible the doctrine of salvation by faith only; for "faith" and "obedience of faith," that is, *the obedience which springs from faith*, are not the same.

One may attempt to render obedience because of what he thinks should be done (Rom. 10: 1-3), while another does that which he believes God wants done; and it is easy to

see that the latter is always a test of the individual's faith. Jehovah has seen fit in every age of the world to justify men on the principle of faith, and he has always selected such acts of obedience, as would adequately test each person's faith; and this principle has always marked the difference between obedience from human reason and obedience which results from faith.

All glory or praise belongs to Jehovah, who is the only wise God (1 Tim. 6: 15, 16), and he has honored his Son as the medium through whom this praise should be given (Eph. 3: 20, 21). The term "Amen" means, "so be it," or, may it be fulfilled.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the fundamental meaning of "admonish" and why is it so essential?
Cite some New Testament admonitions and discuss them.
What is the proper basis for admonitions when Christians seek to help each other? Why?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this text?
Why did Paul want the prayers of the Roman brethren?
What was his over-all purpose in writing the epistle to them?

Some Salutations and a Grave Warning

What does the New Testament teach with reference to saluting with a holy kiss?
How may the principle be applied in our day? Give reasons for your answer.
In what sense did Paul employ the expression "churches of Christ"?
How real is the danger of using the designation "church of Christ" unscripturally?
How was Paul able to include "all" the churches of Christ in the salutation?
Why are *divisions* in the church so harmful and how are they related to "factions"?
What does Paul mean by "marking" those who cause divisions and occasions of stumbling?

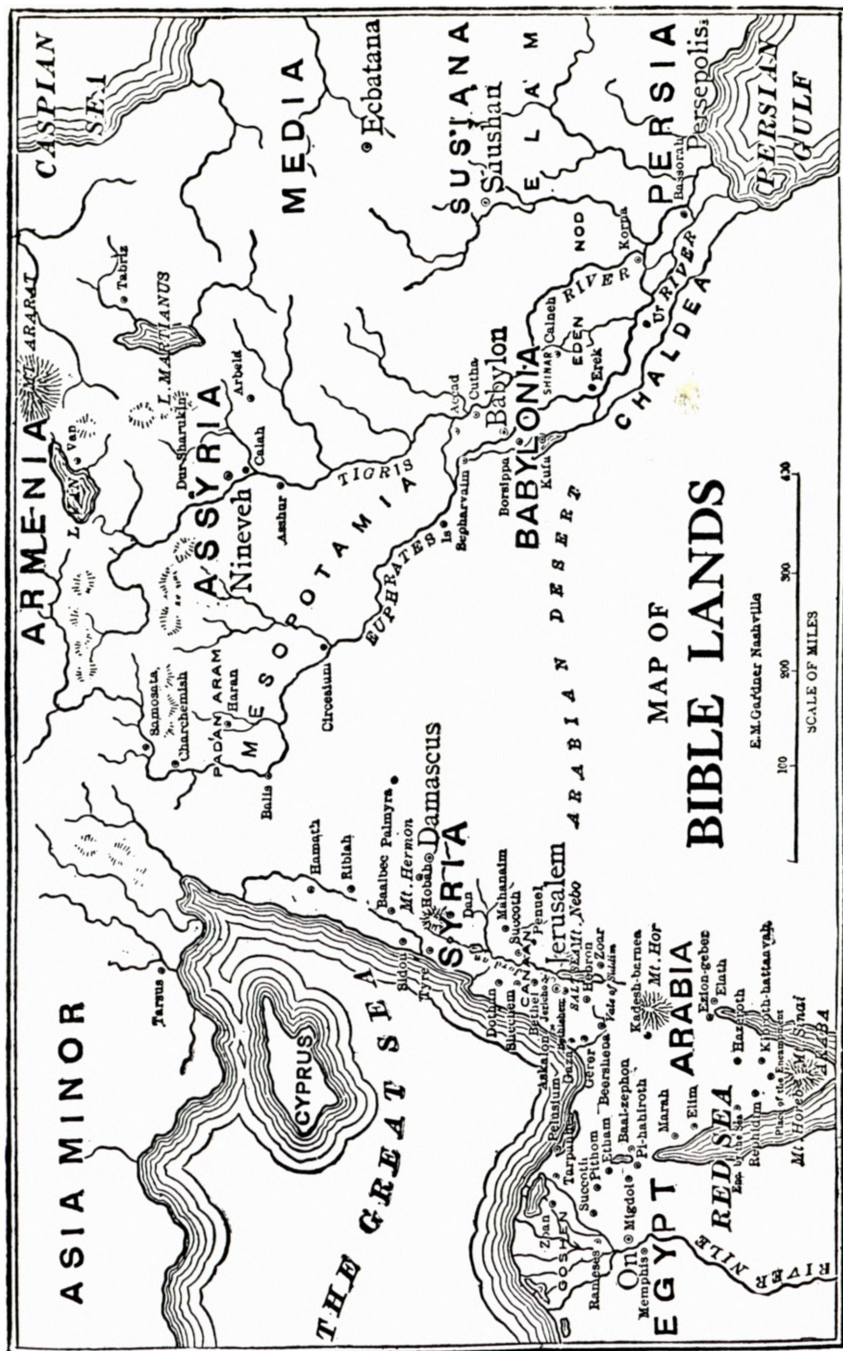
Why is it so important to "avoid" such people?
Why can't such trouble-makers serve the Lord Christ?
How do the dividers of the church usually go about their unholy work?
What responsibility do the "innocent" have in this respect?

God Will Care for His Obedient Children

What did the obedience of the Roman Christians imply and what lesson is there here for us?
What contrast is presented between God and the evil one?
What is implied in Paul's benediction and how widely did he employ it?

The Final Doxology

Why was it appropriate for the Book of Romans to have such a glorious climax?
What are some of the leading ideas in the doxology?
What are some of the things which Paul recalled as he closed the epistle?
What are some of the things which Paul said regarding the gospel which he preached?
Why did God command that the gospel be made known to all nations?
What is the meaning of the expression "unto obedience of faith"?
How do we know that salvation by faith only is not taught in the New Testament?
What two kinds of obedience may people attempt to render?
In what way is glory to be ascribed to God?



SECOND QUARTER

GREAT MEN AND WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

AIM.—To learn the details of, and to observe, the principles which motivated the great men and women of the Old Testament period, and to glean inspiration from their lives.

Lesson I—April 7, 1968

ADAM, THE FIRST MAN

Lesson Text

Gen. 1: 26-30; Acts 17: 26-28; 1 Cor. 15: 45-47

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food:

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and

to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so.

26 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;

27 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:

28 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.

45 So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

46 Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual.

47 The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” (Eccles. 7: 29.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 48, 49.

Daily Bible Readings

April 1. M.....	Creation of Man (Gen. 1: 26-30)
April 2. T.....	Creation of Woman (Gen. 2: 18-25)
April 3. W.....	Jehovah the Creator (Isa. 40: 18-26)
April 4. T.....	Eve Deceived; Not Adam (1 Tim. 2: 11-15)
April 5. F.....	Death Came (Rom. 5: 12-19)
April 6. S.....	Serpent Beguiled Eve (2 Cor. 11: 1-5)
April 7. S.....	Descendants of Adam (Gen. 5: 1-5)

TIME.—Genesis, probably 4004 B.C.; Acts A.D. 51; First Corinthians, A.D. 57.

PLACES.—Genesis, probably in or near the location of the garden of Eden; Acts, Athens; First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Genesis, Jehovah and Adam; Acts, Paul and the Athenian philosophers; First Corinthians, Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Adam occupies a unique place in the history of the world. He was the first human being to be created and in time he came to be regarded as the representative of the entire human race, as well as a type of Christ, at least to some extent. Paul speaks of the man now under consideration as the first Adam, and of Jesus as the last Adam. "So also it is written, the first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor. 15: 45.) However, it is well to note that the principal relation of Adam to Christ is that of contrast, as may be plainly seen by reading Romans 5: 12-21. Adam had the same opportunity to live for God as Jesus did, but he was not true to the trust which was committed to him. He yielded to sin, while Jesus, although subjected to every type of temptation which is known to man (Heb. 4: 14, 15), remained true to Jehovah in every sense of the word (2 Cor. 5: 21; 1 Pet. 2: 21-23; John 8: 46).

The creation of Adam has often been referred to as the crowning act of Jehovah in bringing into being the universe in which we live. Gladstone said that man himself is the crowning wonder of creation; the study of his nature the noblest study the world affords. In the words of Carlyle, "He is of the earth, but his thoughts are with the stars. Mean and petty are his wants and desires; yet they serve a soul exalted with grand, glorious aims,—with i m m o r t a l long-

ings,—with thoughts which sweep the heavens, and wander through eternity. A pigmy standing on the outward crest of this small planet, his far-reaching spirit stretches outward to the infinite, and there alone finds rest." Ralph Barton Perry notes that the most indisputable fact about man is that he is a union, and not a disjunction of contrasted aspects, which are complementaries and not mutually exclusive alternatives. Man is both lower and higher, *both* body and spirit, *both* outer and inner, *both* mechanical and purposive.

Man's original state was one of high privilege and enjoyment; and his relative means and advantages corresponded to his exalted personal condition. The lordship of all creation was committed to him; and the region in which he was to have the seat of his dominion, was the beautiful and incomparable garden of Eden. It seems fair to assume from the divine record that this garden was formed for the immediate occupancy of Adam (Gen. 2: 8), and that it supplied all of his material needs; for it was emphatically a region of life and blessings. Copious and refreshing streams watered it; herbs and trees of every kind grew in it; and in the midst of the garden was the tree of life (Gen. 2: 9), which was capable of sustaining life in undecaying freshness and vigor. Thus, Adam had every opportunity and incentive for faithful service in the presence of his Maker.

The Golden Text

"God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

This evidently has reference to man's original creation, which will be considered more at length in the principal text; but it is well to note here that man did have a beginning which pleased God, but, as has already been observed, that condition did not last. God, as is always the case, did his part well; but Adam and those who followed after him were, and are, responsible for the terrible state of the world today. There is no better illustration of this moral departure from God, than Paul's statement in Romans 1: 18-32. The statement just referred

to, along with the nature of Jehovah, is sufficient to show that it was never God's intention that man should live in sin.

The pronoun "they," in the second clause of the golden text, implies that conditions continued to grow worse, from Adam's time and onward. The history of the world, so far as humanity is concerned, began with a perfect man. This man Adam set in motion the departure from God, and the sinful work has continued on down through the ages. It only required about ten generations to reach the point where only one man, and his immediate family, were acceptable to God.

"And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah." (Gen. 6: 5-8).

Therefore, with the image of God stamped upon their being, and a consciousness of eternity in their heart (Eccles. 3: 11), there is every reason why human beings should live for the Lord; and especially since he has provided for all their needs (Phil. 4: 19). It is with this view of the issue that both the Old and the New Testaments call men's attention to the seriousness of the

question of life. In speaking for Jehovah, Isaiah asks, "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. 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." (Isa. 55: 2, 3.) Jesus put the question in these words: "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matt. 16: 26.) There is within the human race a universal hunger and thirst for that which the material world can never satisfy. It is indeed a sad commentary on the human race that mankind will go to so much trouble to make trouble for themselves. (2 Tim. 3: 1-13.)

The Text Explained

The Creation of Man and His Dominion

(Gen. 1: 26-30)

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so.

The great work of reconstructing the earth, and making it a suitable

place for the habitation of mankind, is set forth in Genesis 1: 3-25. The language which Moses employed in writing this narrative, that is, the original language, clearly shows the difference between that which was created outright, that is, that which was made out of nothing, and that which was restored. Furthermore, there is no reason for thinking that the six days of the first chapter of Genesis are anything but twenty-four hour days, as we understand that expression. Sidney Collett has observed that "throughout the whole of Scriptures the word day is never used to represent a lengthened period when a numeral is connected with it." Thus, one day, three days, four days, one hundred and fifty days, always means a twenty-four hour day, or a fraction thereof.

If one will stop and examine the grammatical construction of the Hebrew in the first chapter of Genesis, he will find that the term for God is, to employ a simple transliteration, *Elohim*, the plural of *Eloah*; but that this noun is used with a singular verb, or, which is the same thing, a plural subject and a singular predicate. Many Bible students are of the opinion that the use of a plural subject with a singular verb

indicates plenitude of might and unlimited greatness, or, to state the same thing in another way, in Jehovah are united all the powers of eternity and infinity, which may be spoken of as a "plural of majesty." The creation of man has been called the supreme moment of God's creation.

Man has been given dominion over the created universe, and was told to subdue it, that is, dominate the earth. This certainly means that man should learn all the facts he can regarding them (Job 12: 7-12); but he should always remember that both he and all that is in the earth were created by Jehovah, and that he continues as the Supreme Ruler of all things. The realization of man's great responsibilities should certainly humble him. (Psalm 8: 1-9.) If Genesis 1: 29 and 9: 1-3 are read in the light of each other, it appears that man was not permitted to eat flesh as food until after the flood. (1 Tim. 4: 1-5.) The primary meaning of the Hebrew word for "replenish" is to *fill*, with no idea of filling again. Some translations, such as *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* and the *Revised Standard Version*, use the word *fill* instead of *replenish*.

All Men Have Descended From Adam

(Acts 17: 26-28)

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.

Thus, instead of being the ruler of a single nation which he defends against other nations, as many people of that day thought, God controls all men of every nation, inasmuch as they are his by right of creation. Jehovah also determined, or fixed, their "appointed seasons," that is, the periods of human history, which he controls, and the "bounds of their habitation," or, the

boundaries of their dwelling-places. *The New English Bible* renders the passage in these words: "He fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory." God therefore has determined the destiny of nations, both as to duration of time and extension in space.

The apostle Paul says that the over-all Divine purpose in the creation of the human race, and the controlling of all men, was and is that they should seek God. Meyer notes that "the great thought of the passage is simply: God the Author, the Governor, and the End of the world's history: *from God, through God, to God*. Paul keeps consistently to his figure. The seeker who comes on his object *touches* and grasps it, and has now in reality *found* it. Hence the meaning without the figure is, *if perchance they might become conscious of God and of their relation to him, and might appropriate this consciousness as a spiritual possession*. Thus they would have understood the guidance of the nations as a revelation of God, and have complied with its holy design in their own case."

When it is affirmed that in God we live, and move, and have our being, the idea is that we are dependent upon him for our very existence. The poetic words which Paul quoted are found in the works of Aratus of Cilicia, a poet of Paul's own province, and also in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Jupiter*. The latter was a Stoic philosopher, and it is very likely that Paul had him in mind, inasmuch as he was speaking to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, and he called the writer in question one of "your own poets."

Paul knew, of course, that the words which he quoted were written of Jupiter, also known as Zeus, his Greek name; but he applied the idea which the poet expressed to the point which he had just made regarding the relationship of men to God. This was the apostle's way of showing the absurdity of idolatry. The people who were listening to Paul knew that men are not made of gold, or silver, or stone; and it was therefore absurd to think that the Being from whom they had issued was composed of such materials, having been graven by art and device of man. The term "Godhead"

is used here in the sense of that which is Divine.

The term "Godhead" is a prominent word in the vocabulary of the Lord's people today, and it is probably in order to say something about it here. The basic meaning of *Godhead* ("Godhood," a term not as widely used as *Godhead*, but with substantially the same meaning) is the state or quality of a god, and in the case of the Bible, the state or position of being God, that is, Jehovah. Manhood is that which makes man a *man*, and Godhood is that which makes God God.

When the term "Godhead" is ascribed to any being, the implication is that all which enters into the idea of God belongs to that being. (Col. 2: 9; Acts 5: 3, 4.) The terms *Godhead*, *Deity*, and *Divinity*, are equivalent, and all refer to God; and they are, of course, applicable alike to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. *Godhead* is *Godship*, and it describes the character of God.

The word "Godhead" is found three times in the King James Version of the New Testament, twice in the American Standard Version, and not at all in some translations. The three instances where the term is used in the King James Version are Acts 17: 29; Romans 1: 20; and Colossians 2: 9. Only the first and third of these instances are so rendered in the American Standard Version. Furthermore, in no two instances in either version is the rendering from the same original Greek word, as may be seen from the following analysis.

(1) Acts 17: 29—*theios: that which is divine*. The contrast in this passage is between the Divine Being and idols, which are the work of men's hands, as may be seen by reading the context. (This original word is also found in 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4, and is translated "divine.")

(2) Rom. 1: 20—*theiotes* (only here in the New Testament), *the divine nature and attributes*. This term is appropriate here, because God is not *personally* known by his in nature; only his *attributes* are perceived. (Cf. Psalm 19: 1ff.)

(3) Col. 2: 9—*theotes* (only here in the New Testament): the *Divine Personality*. Paul's purpose here is to show that Christ is just as divine

as his Father (God) is, or, to state the same thing in another way, this is the apostle's declaration of the absolute Deity of Jesus Christ, so far as his relation to God is concerned. (Read the context.)

The First Adam versus the Last Adam

(1 Cor. 15: 45-47)

So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

This section of the lesson text is taken from Paul's discussion of the resurrection, and what is said here was used by him to illustrate some basic teaching, which every child of God, and even every prospective child of God, should know. The two Adams are the heads of all humanity; and each stamps his characteristics on those who partake of his nature. The phrase "the last Adam" was apparently coined, or at least used, by Paul to indicate that there can be no third representative of mankind, sinless and without human father, as were both Adam and Christ. And so, if God's last Adam had failed, there could have been no other. (Cf. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, in loco*.)

The contrast between the two Adams of the lesson text begins with their respective natures: Adam *became* a living soul, because God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2: 7); while Christ *became* a life-giving spirit, that is, a Spirit which could and does impart life. (John 1: 4; 5: 40; 10: 10; 11: 25, 26; 14: 6.) But Paul makes it plain that of the two heads of mankind, the natural comes first; and this is a general principle which is seen in all realms of human history, namely, that the lower always precedes the higher. Thus, we are Adam's by generation, and Christ's by regeneration. The life principle of Adam was natural, but the life principle of Christ is spiritual; and so, the two families are like their heads: those of Adam are characterized by physical natures, while those

of Christ are characterized by spiritual natures. (Rom. 6: 3, 4; 2 Cor.

5: 17; Tit. 3: 5; Eph. 2: 10; Gal. 2: 20.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What unusual place does Adam occupy in the annals of mankind?
In what way was he related to Christ?
In what did Adam's greatest mistake consist?
What did Jesus do under similar circumstances?
What was man's relation to the rest of the created universe?
What wonderful opportunities were given to Adam?

The Golden Text

To what particular event do the words of the golden text evidently have reference?
Why, then, did the world of mankind become so corrupt?
In what way did Paul describe this state of affairs?
What is the significance of the pronoun "they"?
Describe the rapid growth of wickedness during the antediluvian period of the world.
What motives for right living did Jehovah place before man?

The Creation of Man and His Dominion

Discuss the background against which the creation of man was brought about.
What is the probable meaning of the plural in the expression "Let *us* make man in *our* image"?

In what sense was man made in the image of God?
In what way is man's restoration to God's favor described?
How is man to have dominion over the earth?
What appears to have been his original source of food supply?
In what sense was mankind to *replenish* the earth?

All Men Have Descended from Adam

What is the fundamental relationship of all nations of the earth?
What misconception did the people prior to the coming of Christ have with reference to God and his people?
Why does Jehovah have the right to control, that is, rule, all men?
How close is the human race to God?
What was his purpose regarding all people?
How did Paul prove his point, insofar as the people to whom he spoke were concerned?

The First Adam *versus* the Last Adam

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of this section of the lesson text?
What is the relationship of the two "Adams" to the human race?
Why did Paul employ the expression "*last Adam*" rather than "*second Adam*"?
Discuss the contrast which Paul made between the two.
Which always comes first?
In what sense do people today belong to the two Adams?
What characterizes the two families?

Lesson II—April 14, 1968

EVE, THE FIRST WOMAN

Lesson Text

Gen. 2: 15-25

15 And Je-ho'-vah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And Je-ho'-vah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 And Je-ho'-vah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

19 And out of the ground Je-ho'-vah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to

see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

20 And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him.

21 And Je-ho'-vah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof:

22 And the rib, which Je-ho'-vah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And the man said, This is now

bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall

cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."* (1 Cor. 11: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 5: 22-33.

Daily Bible Readings

April 8. M.....	The Record of Creation (Gen. 1: 6-31)
April 9. T.....	Design of Creation (Rev. 4: 1-11)
April 10. W.....	Deception of Eve (Gen. 3: 1-8)
April 11. T.....	Curse upon Eve (Gen. 3: 14-21)
April 12. F.....	Adam and Eve Expelled from Eden (Gen. 3: 22-24)
April 13. S.....	Family of Adam and Eve (Gen. 4: 1-26)
April 14. S.....	Book of Generations of Adam and Eve (Gen. 5: 1-32)

TIME.—4004 B.C.

PLACE.—Probably in or near the location of the garden of Eden.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Adam, and Eve.

Introduction

The origin and place of woman in the divine economy is a subject in which we all should be interested, but it is a subject which demands careful attention, if we are not to go astray in some of its details. The full account of the origin of woman is found in the second chapter of Genesis.

If we go back to chapter 1 and read of the creation of man we shall also read of the creation of woman in the same connection: "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them.*" (Gen. 1: 27.)

The reason for the creation is

clearly stated in the text: she was to be a help suited to the man's needs. The term "helpmeet" does not exactly express the idea which is found in the Scriptures. Man alone was incomplete for the purpose which God had in mind, and it was therefore necessary that a companion be created which would supply that need, hence the statement, "I will make him a help meet, that is, one answering to his needs. This idea expresses woman's true relationship to the man. She is his counterpart, his complement, and whenever this is realized in marriage, God's purpose is being fulfilled.

The Golden Text

"For neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

This statement is in complete harmony with the narrated facts of our lesson text. The man was created first, that is, before the woman, and when there was found no suitable companion for him in all the previous creation, woman was made for him. This does not mean that she was made simply for his own pleasure, but rather in order to enable man to fulfill his highest and greatest possibilities as God has ordained.

The woman, then, was the crowning act of the last scene in the drama of creation. She, as well as the man, was the offspring of Jeho-

vah's creative power, and was a microcosm of animated nature in a personal and social embodiment, in which the Creator and the creature are for ever united in the bonds of a body compact, "pregnant with all the elements of social being and social blessedness."

Most people are acquainted with the remark which suggests that woman was not taken from the head of man, lest she be regarded as his superior; nor from his foot, lest she be looked upon as his inferior; but rather from his side, so that she could be thought of as his equal. There is, no doubt, an element of truth in this viewpoint, but it should be interpreted in the light of the

Scriptures. (1 Cor. 11: 2-16; Eph. 5: 22-33; 1 Tim. 2: 11-15; 1 Peter 3: 1-6.) Our lesson today deals, not only with the creation of woman,

but also with the primary ordinance of marriage which was and is essential to both human life and the elevation of the race.

The Text Explained

Work and Responsibility Ordained for Man

(Gen. 2: 15-17)

And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

There are some people who look upon labor as a curse which resulted from the fall of man, but the error of that idea is clearly seen in the passage now before us. Man's assignment to dress and keep the garden of Eden was made before sin entered into the world. This clearly shows that God intended from the very beginning that man have work to do. The necessity of service is one of the fundamental principles of man's existence. Few things bring more genuine satisfaction than that which comes from the performance of the work which God has given us to do.

After sin entered into the world there was a condition brought forth which did make toil out of man's work; but that was because the ground itself was cursed: "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3: 17-19.)

The New Testament specifically teaches that it is disorderly conduct for an able-bodied Christian not to work. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own

bread. (2 Thess. 3: 10-12. Read also verses 6 through 15.)

And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

It is here for the first time that we are introduced to the idea that man is capable of receiving and understanding instruction from his Maker; and herein is also seen man's responsibility. His freedom was to be a freedom within certain limits. The authority of God must always be recognized and respected. One prohibition may seem insignificant within itself; but if it is disregarded the result will be the eternal condemnation of the soul. (James 2: 10; 4: 17.)

We are not told anything about the particular nature of the tree which is here called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, other than the fact that when its fruit (whatever it was) was eaten, the one eating would acquire the ability to tell good from evil. (Gen. 3: 1-7.) The tree stood before the primeval pair as a test of their obedience. The principle of obedience can be emphasized as easily one way as another; but it is the prerogative of God to designate the manner of the test.

The result of disobedience is declared to be death, the first mention of such a penalty in the Scriptures; and it is well to keep in mind that the idea conveyed by death is that of separation rather than annihilation. James says, "For as the body *apart* from the spirit is dead, even so faith *apart* from works is dead." (James 2: 26.)

Making Man Conscious of His Need

(Gen. 2: 18-20)

And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

This is another way of showing that man is separate and distinct from the brute creation. He was alone so far as any companionship was concerned. That is what God said about it and it could never be otherwise without a further creation.

And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

Some Bible students are of the opinion that one of the reasons for bringing the lower creation before man was to make him conscious of his own need. Adam's ability to name all the creatures was a demonstration of his dominion over the natural sphere. References to man's exalted station in the universe are found in various parts of the Bible (cf. Psalm 8), and some one has suggested that it is not altogether speculative to try to imagine the direction this lordship would have taken if sin had not entered into the world. (Isa. 11: 6-9; Heb. 2: 5-10; Rom. 8: 18-23.)

And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him.

The design of this scene seems to have been to show Adam that nothing alive of God's creation was on an equal footing with him. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that all the various animals and birds came with their mates, thus impressing the man of his own need with respect to companionship. The term "found" implies that an effort was made to determine whether or not there was among the created things a help suited to his needs. This, of course, was done for the benefit of Adam, and not to convince God of the lack; for Jehovah already knew that there was no such help before the animals were brought to man. (See verse 18.)

Woman Created and Marriage Instituted

(Gen. 2: 21-25)

And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he

slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

Unless one is careful, he is likely to try to interpret this transaction in the light of the time and effort which a surgeon would require if he were performing such an operation. But when we consider the fact that the entire universe, along with all the living creatures of the earth, was created in the short space of six days it would seem improper for us to think that comparable time and effort to that of a surgeon were required of God. Adam's sleep and the whole process of the creation of woman were miraculous.

And the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

This statement seems to imply that a part of both the bone and the flesh of Adam were taken, and from them the woman was made. God could have, of course, made the woman out of the dust of the earth, just as he did the man, but if that had been done, she would have appeared to him as a distinct being, with no natural relation to him. But since Jehovah made her out of a part of the man himself, he saw that she was of the same nature, that is, of the same flesh and bone as himself; and that would at once "ensure his affection, and excite his esteem."

Jehovah himself tells us why he made the woman, namely, a help suitable to man's needs; and this means that they complement each other. In answer to the question, What is *woman*? Campbell observes, "She is but the one-half of man—only the one-half of humanity. But she is, or may be, the better half. She is of a finer tissue in body, soul, and spirit: the last, and, we think—if mortals of such dim vision and within so contracted a horizon dare so think—decidedly the better half—not in muscular power, not in physical strength, not in animal courage, not in intellectual vigor, but in delicacy of thought, in sensitiveness of feeling, in patient endurance, in constancy of affection,

in moral courage, and in soul absorbing devotion.

"But God did not for her own sake bestow upon her all these distinguishing qualities. He did not, indeed, create her immediately from the earth. Adam was made out of the cold dust of Eden; but Eve was made out of the animated dust."

It cannot be exaggeration to say that she was the most beautiful woman that ever lived. Untouched by sin, with its suffering, cares, tears, sorrows and toil; pure of soul and perfect in mind and body, she was God's masterpiece, queen of all women that ever lived.

The first poem in the Bible is occasioned by that event which inspires most of our great poets to write their first poem. When man looked upon woman for the first time when God presented her to him, he said in surprise and gladness:

She, she is bone of my bone,
And flesh of my flesh is she:

Woman, her name, which is
grown

Out of man, out of me."

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

This passage clearly teaches that God has ordained that there shall be a more intimate connection formed between husband and wife than there can be between parents and children. This implies, of course, that when two people are united in marriage the tie which binds them together is the strongest bond which should affect their lives. This does not mean that children should love their parents less, but rather that they should love their companions more.

The divine conception of marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. Jesus makes this Plain in Matthew 19: 3-9: "And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. What there-

fore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; *but from the beginning it hath not been so.* And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away, his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery." Jesus in making this statement struck at one of the most fruitful sources of the degradation of human society—namely, the departure from the divine plan for marriage, as given by God in the beginning of the race.

The Lord makes it plain that sin can enter in and break the union, but that is entirely contrary to God's will and purpose. Charles Foster Kent notes that "Jesus' teachings on this subject to not stand alone, but are an integral part of his practical philosophy of living. These principles, when applied to the problems of life, make his austere position eminently practical. It is the despondent husband or the nerve-racked wife who supremely needs the loyal love and sympathetic help of the one who too often selfishly seeks to escape these obligations through divorce. All the chivalry of Jesus' nature revolted against the craven cowardice and the beastly egoism revealed in an ordinary divorce procedure. He fought it not merely by direct command, but by making love the ruling principle in human life and by thus eliminating the causes which lead to divorce. When husband and wife are working whole-heartedly for each other's happiness and highest development, divorce is an impossibility. The limitations and needs of the one tend only to inspire the sympathy and devotion of the other. A marriage consummated and interpreted in accord with Jesus' principle of living is impregnable. But if founded simply on the shifting sands of personal passion and caprice it is in constant danger of only adding to the hideous social wreckage of the divorce courts.

"All the secrets of married happi-

ness in the world will not solve the problems of certain homes until the personalities in them are literally reborn. The most important secret of married happiness lies in the character of the people who make up a home. You know certain individuals who seem unable to make a happy or successful adjustment in any kind of human relationship. The trouble is not with marriage but with the people who embrace it. It is not marriage which fails, it is the people who undertake it who

fail in this most delicate intimate relationship of life."

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Not only was the temperature perfect for their needs, but sin had not entered into their lives. No part of their body had been put to any improper use, and there was therefore no shame; for shame can arise only from a consciousness of sinful or irregular conduct.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What does the Bible say regarding the origin and place of woman in the divine economy?

Why was the woman created?

What, then, is God's purpose in the marriage relationship?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text written?

Why was woman created after man?

What is the nature of the social relationship which God ordained for his people?

What possible reason has been suggested for taking woman from man's side?

Why should this idea be considered in the light of the Scriptures?

Why should the marriage relationship be considered often?

What is God's only plan for the reproduction of human life and the elevation of the race?

What, then, is the oldest institution in the world?

Work and Responsibility Ordained for Man

What mistaken attitude do many people have with reference to work?

When and under what circumstances was work ordained for man?

Why does God-ordained work bring such genuine satisfaction to the human race?

What new dimension was added to work when sin entered the world?

What does the New Testament teach on the subject of work on the part of able-bodied Christians?

How do we know that man is responsible in the sight of God?

What is the effect of disregarding even one thing which Jehovah has commanded or prohibited?

What standard did God prescribe for telling good from evil?

In what sense did Adam and Eve die when they disobeyed God?

Making Man Conscious of His Need

What was the status of man with reference to other of God's creation?

In what sense, then, was man alone before the creation of woman?

What was the probable reason for bringing the beasts and birds before Adam?

What ability did he demonstrate at that time?

What conclusion was reached when all the birds and animals had passed before Adam?

Woman Created and Marriage Instituted

What was the evident reason for using a part of Adam, rather than dust, for the making of Eve?

How do man and woman compare with each other with reference to their nature?

How did Adam feel toward Eve, when he first saw her; and in what way did he express himself?

Discuss the bond which binds the husband and wife together.

What is the divine conception of marriage, as revealed in the Bible?

Lesson III—April 21, 1968

NOAH, A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Lesson Text

Gen. 6: 8-12; 9: 1, 2; 2 Pet. 2: 4, 5

8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah.

9 These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Ja'-pheth.

11 And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God saw the earth, and,

behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens; with all where-with the ground teemeth, and all the

fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered.

4 For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

5 And spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house"* (Heb. 11: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 9: 11-17.

Daily Bible Readings

April 15. M.....	Birth and Parentage of Noah (Gen. 5: 28-32)
April 16. T.....	Noah, a Righteous Man (Gen. 6: 9-12)
April 17. W.....	Conditions in Noah's Day (Gen. 6: 1-8)
April 18. T.....	Noah Builds an Ark (Gen. 6: 13-16)
April 19. F.....	Noah's Faith (Heb. 11: 1-7)
April 20. S.....	God's Covenant with Noah (Gen. 9: 8-17)
April 21. S.....	Noah, a Preacher of Righteousness (2 Pet. 2: 1-5)

TIME.—Genesis, 2468, 2347 B.C.; Second Peter, A.D. 65.

PLACES.—Genesis, in the general vicinity of the East; Second Peter, not known.

PERSONS.—Genesis, Jehovah, Noah, and his three sons; Second Peter, Peter and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

It appears from the inspired record that the first great event which impressed itself indelibly upon the memory of the primeval race was that of the flood. We do not know, of course, just how far the human population had spread from its original center, and Bible students have long wondered if the entire face of the globe, as that expression is generally understood, was covered by the waters of the flood, or only that portion of the earth which was then inhabited was affected. In Genesis 7: 19 we read, "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered." It appears from the record that the part of the earth which was known to have been inhabited at that time, was the great plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

It is with reference to the moral, rather than with the physical, aspects of the flood that we are concerned at this time. The cause of

the flood was the great wickedness of the people which, as one may see by reading the inspired record, was described by the strongest of language. The corruption of the world at the time of this lesson was not only practically universal; it was also colossal. The men of that period were not content merely with performing wicked deeds; the very thoughts from which their actions sprang were only evil continually. This means that all was corrupt within and all was unrighteous without. This terrible condition can be matched only by Paul's description of the Gentile world in Romans 1: 18-32. There was a pitiable contrast between that which Jehovah saw during the close of the antediluvian age, and that which he saw when he had finished his work of creation, namely, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1: 31.)

There was, however, a ray of hope amid the gathering clouds of de-

struction. Noah not only was a good man; he was also interested in both the glory of God and the welfare of his fellow men. When a man loses sight of himself, because he is a child of God, and sees the wickedness of those about him, his attitude becomes that of a reformer. This is due to the fact that he wants to do what he can to turn men from their evil ways, and lead them back to God. Such a man knows that when men die in their sins, there is only one fate for them, namely, eternal punishment; and he is willing therefore to make every sacrifice possible to make known to them God's will and way. Although the

world was exceedingly corrupt, as we have already seen, Noah did not despair nor remain silent. It would be easier for a lesser character to drop the curtain and leave the world to its fate; but there could be nothing noble about that. The greatest thing that one can do under such circumstances is to refuse to accept the condition of the world as final, and to resolve to continue to fight for truth and righteousness until its sin is washed away. That was the attitude of Noah, and his work continued until he was commanded to enter the ark. It is no wonder that Peter calls him a preacher of righteousness.

The Golden Text

"By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The statement just quoted is a part of the writer of Hebrews' great treatise on faith, and it immediately follows that which he said regarding the importance of faith and the two basic ingredients which combine to make faith possible. The passage just referred to reads as follows: "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) After showing that faith is absolutely necessary, in order to please God, the writer then goes on to point out the two elements which, when properly united, result in the faith which is acceptable to God, namely, (1) *conviction* and (2) *confidence*. The passage just quoted is a practical repetition of verse 1, which is rendered by Edward Robinson in these words: "Faith is confidence as to things hoped for; conviction as to things not seen."

Noah was a good man, and he wanted to please God; and that required that he (1) be convicted or convinced as to the unseen disaster which was soon to envelop the earth; and (2) have confidence that he and his family would be delivered from the catastrophe in keeping with the promise which Jehovah had made to him. If we read the passage now under consideration in connection with Peter's statement regarding the salvation of Noah, it will be easy for us to see all of the contributing factors of the salvation

in question; and it will be equally plain that the salvation was not by faith alone. "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (Heb. 11: 7.) "That aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." (1 Pet. 3: 20.)

The three contributing factors in the salvation of Noah and his family were (1) *faith*, (2) the *ark*, and (3) the *water*; and not only did Noah preach righteousness, he also "became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (Phil. 3: 9; Rom. 9: 30-33.) Thus, Noah's personal conduct was in complete accord with his preaching; and we may be certain that he was always careful to practice himself that which he taught and exhorted others to do. For, example, being warned of God, he was moved with godly fear; and if one should ask, To what extent was he moved? the answer is he was moved to do exactly that which God told him to do, namely build an ark to the saving of his house. It was that kind of obedience which resulted in his salvation (does any one think that Noah would have been saved, if he had refused to do that which God told him to do?); and that is the

principle upon which the salvation today is based. (Heb. 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16.) If any one wants to counter, Well, if people must be baptized in order to be saved, then

the majority of them will be lost. That was true in Noah's day, that is, few were saved (1 Pet. 3: 20; Matt. 7: 14); and people today, accordingly, should take warning.

The Text Explained

Noah and His Sons in a Wicked World

(Gen. 6: 8-12)

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.

The statement just quoted is in direct contrast with the passage which precedes it, namely, "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy man who I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them." (Gen. 6: 5-7; cf. Rom. 8: 18-22.)

The contrast just referred to is significant, as indeed are all such antitheses; and it should be considered with care. Destruction had been decreed for the entire human race, *but* mankind would not be annihilated. God's mercy would lead him to save those who trusted in him, or who had confidence in his promises, just as his justice would cause him to punish the wicked. "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. . . ." (2 Pet. 2: 4-9.)

The term "favor" means grace; or, to state the same thing in another way, grace is unmerited favor. Such a blessing is always given without compensation, and there is nothing which the one needing the favor can do to earn or deserve it. (Eph. 2: 8, 9; Tit. 3: 5.) When the text we are now considering says that Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah, the practical meaning is that he was found acceptable to

God. This does not imply that Noah was entirely without fault, inasmuch as he was a human being; but it does signify that his heart was right, and that his life was such as to make him worthy to be favored of Jehovah. This great patriarch, in contrast with his contemporaries, did not deserve to be lost.

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

If one will read the Book of Genesis carefully, he will see that the contents are divided among several "generations," and that an analysis of the entire book can be made under the various headings of these generations. This means, of course, that a new section begins with the paragraph just quoted.

In saying that Noah was *righteous* and *perfect*, the inspired writer did not mean that he was righteous and perfect in the absolute sense of those terms (cf. Rom. 3: 10, 23). He was righteous in the sense that God regarded him as such, because he kept his commandments (Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15; Rom. 4: 1-8); and he was perfect (*blameless*, margin) in that he was not blameworthy.

Noah walked with God, and that was the reason for, and the basis of, his commendable character. The expression "walked with God" was applied only to Enoch and Noah, among the antediluvians; and it denotes a habitual practice. The sons of Noah are usually listed as Shem, Ham, and Japheth; but it appears from Genesis 9: 24; and 10: 21 that the order of their births were Shem, Japheth, and Ham. The fact that they, along with their parents and their wives, were saved in the ark,

indicates that they also were righteous. Ecclesiastes 7: 29: "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," gives some idea of how the people of Noah's day corrupted themselves—"And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

A New Beginning for the Human Race

(Gen. 9: 1, 2)

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens; with all wherewith the ground teemeth, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered.

Noah, at this point in the history of the world, took his place as the second head of the human race. This was due to the fact that there was to be a new start, a fresh beginning, and full of hope; for it had the assurance of every Divine blessing. The benediction which was pronounced upon Noah and his sons was comparable to the one which Jehovah pronounced upon Adam at the beginning. (Gen. 1: 28.) Divine exhortation always follows Divine blessing; and it was in this way that Jehovah took the necessary steps to ensure the continuation of human life here upon the earth. The promise that the fear and dread of the human race would be felt by beasts, birds, and the creeping things of the earth, along with the fishes of the sea, was but a repetition of that which was said to Adam, as may be seen by reading the closing part of Genesis 1.

If one will take the time, and will make the effort, to search the Scriptures, he will find that Jehovah has, in effect, made possible a new beginning for his people, and for those who would have the opportunity of becoming his people, on several occasions. (Cf. Abraham, who not only became the head of the Hebrew race, but also the father of the faithful; Moses, who led the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, gave them a law,

and constituted them into a nation; the fresh start in Palestine after the Babylonian captivity, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.)

But the greatest and most enduring new beginning which has been granted to mankind, was the one which was made possible by the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire world was steeped in sin when God, because of his great love for the lost (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8), sent his Son to make possible the salvation of all men (Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9; 11: 32; Heb. 2: 9). Jesus himself set forth the idea of a new beginning for every one under the figure of a new birth (John 3: 3-5), while Paul refers to it as a new creation (2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 10; Tit. 3: 5, 6). The hope of this new beginning for every sinner on the earth may be spoken of as the heart of the gospel; and it was for this reason that the Lord commanded that it be preached to all men everywhere. (Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24: 46, 47.)

It is extremely difficult to get some people to realize that there is a new beginning possible for them. Perhaps an illustration from the ordinary walks of life may cause some to see such a possibility. Some years ago an article was published in a national magazine which told of many men whose careers were interrupted by war, and who, as a consequence, had to make a second start; but for whom the second start was far better for them than the first one had been. Among the men whose names were mentioned in the article was Mr. Eric Johnston, who was a soldier in World War I.

Mr. Johnston had only recently finished law school when the United States became involved in that great conflict, and was about ready to take the bar examination. He entered the service of his country instead; and when the armistice was signed, he was a captain in the marines. He decided to remain in the service; but in 1920, while in Peking, he was seriously injured. A year later he was retired from the armed services, but was too ill to return to law or to any indoor work. He went to his home in Spokane, married his high school sweetheart, and began selling vacuum cleaners from door to door.

At the end of the year he was able to purchase an interest in the business; and when he reached the age of forty-eight, he owned the two largest electrical companies in the northwest, and became the youngest man, up to that time, ever to be elected president of the United States Chamber of Commerce. In speaking of his own experience, Mr. Johnston said, "I believe that many a veteran will be as grateful for his second start as I am for mine. The break with the past can be a big break for the future."

But what is more important, there is an opportunity for a new beginning for every man into whose life sin has brought defeat; and it is a fact, worthy of serious consideration, that sin, in the long run, never brings anything to people but defeat. This is true, because every sinner is a bondservant of sin (John 8: 34); and the devil is never interested in releasing any one from such bondage, or in making it possible for those under his control to be made better. But it is here that the Bible is most hopeful; for the Lord himself, who is stronger than Satan (1 John 4: 4), has offered to every sinner a new start in life. (Read Rom. 6: 16-18 in the light of Rom. 6: 1-7.)

Not only does the person, who has been born again, or, which is the same thing, the new creature in Christ, have a new beginning; he is also assured that his old sins will never be remembered against him again. (Isa. 1: 18; Heb. 8: 12.) The break with the past in his case always brings a blessing for the future. (Rom. 5: 1ff.) Louisa Fletcher, in speaking of the possibility now under consideration, calls it *The Land of Beginning Again*, and her words follow:

I wish that there were some wonderful place
Called the Land of Beginning Again,
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door,
And never be put on again.

For what had been hardest we'd know had been best,

And what had seemed loss would be gain;
For there isn't a sting that will not take wing
We've faced it and laughed it away;
And I think that the laughter is most what we're after
In the Land of Beginning Again.

The poet, speaking only from the standpoint of this life, thinks "that the laughter is most what we're after"; but with the redeemed child of God, it is the satisfaction that sin is in the past, and that he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Every thoughtful person, particularly those who have come under the influence of the gospel, means to do better sometime; but all men should remember that it may be later for them than they think. No excuse which they may try to offer in the last day can compensate for their failure to act. Too late, too late, poor trembling

soul,
O will this be your fate?
Too late, too late to be made whole,
Too late, too late, too late.

Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: It might have been!

Ancient Examples of Retribution and Deliverance

(2 Pet. 2: 4, 5)

For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly-

The marginal reading for a preacher" is a *herald*, which is to say that Noah was a herald of righteousness. We learn from many parts of the Bible that righteousness and God's commandments are inseparable. "When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah our God hath commanded you? then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt: and Jehovah brought us out of

Egypt with a mighty hand; and Jehovah showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his house, before our eyes; and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us." (Deut. 6: 20-25; cf. Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15.)

This should be enough to show us that any person can be righteous, only by doing that which is commanded for him by the Lord. (Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.) The Jews, referred to in the last passage

cited, made the mistake of trying to substitute their own way of thinking for that which the Lord revealed. (Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Noah was a preacher of righteousness, because he proclaimed that which Jehovah told him to preach; which included the truth regarding the ark and the impending flood. It is obvious to any thoughtful person today that no one in this age of the world could be a preacher of righteousness, by proclaiming the message which Jehovah commanded Noah to preach. And if it is true with respect to that ancient herald of righteousness, it is also true of any system of religious instruction which is not directly commanded of those who endeavor to observe it. (Cf. the Jewish sabbath, for example; and consider the implications of Galatians 1: 6-9.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give times, places, and persons.

Introduction

What place did the flood have in the primeval history of the human race?

What was the most significant aspect of the flood?

What ray of hope characterized the great catastrophe?

What disposition did Noah manifest?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances, or against what background, were the words of this text written?

What importance is attached to faith and of what is it composed?

What were the three contributing factors to Noah's salvation and what do they imply?

Noah and His Sons in a Wicked World

What contrast was seen between Noah and his contemporaries?

What long-ranged result was seen by this contrast?

What is the meaning of "favor"?

What place does the term "generations" have in the Book of Genesis?

In what sense was Noah righteous and perfect?

What did it mean for Noah to walk with God?

Who were the sons of Noah, and what was the order of their ages?

A New Beginning for the Human Race

What new relationship did Noah assume

at this point in the history of the world?

How did his new position compare with that of Adam? Give reasons for your answer.

What has Jehovah repeatedly done for his sinful people?

Name and discuss some of the new beginnings which he has made possible.

What was the greatest of all of the new starts which he made possible and why?

How did Jesus and Paul set forth the nature of this new beginning?

Why is it so difficult to get the vast majority of people to accept this new chance in life?

Illustrate the principle of a new beginning from the ordinary walks of life.

What is the most significant new beginning for any person?

Why are so many people content to remain in the power of the evil one?

Why is the break with the past so essential to acceptance with God?

What is the most significant truth about our "land of beginning again"?

Ancient Examples of Retribution and Deliverance

What does it mean for one to be a preacher of righteousness?

What is the meaning of "righteousness"?

How, then, can any person become righteous in God's sight?

What great mistake did the Jews of Paul's day make in this respect?

Why is this same situation repeated so often today?

Why was Noah called a preacher of righteousness?

Lesson IV—April 28, 1968

ABRAHAM AND LOT

Lesson Text

Gen. 13: 5-15

5 And Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Ca'-naan-ite and the Per'-izite dwelt then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if *thou wilt take* the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if *thou take* the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and behold all the Plain of the Jordan,

that it was well watered every where, before Je-ho'-vah destroyed Sod'-om and Go-mor'-rah, like the garden of Je-ho'-vah, like the land of E'-gypt, as thou goest unto Zo'-ar.

11 So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Ca'-naan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sod'-om.

13 Now the men of Sod'-om were wicked and sinners against Je-ho'-vah exceedingly.

14 And Je-ho'-vah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness"* (Gal. 3: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 14: 13-34.

Daily Bible Readings

April 22. M.....	Birth of Abraham (Gen. 11: 28-31)
April 23. T.....	Abraham's Early Life (Josh. 24: 1-3)
April 24. W.....	Abraham's Wife (1 Pet. 3: 1-6)
April 25. T.....	Abraham's Faithfulness (James 2: 20-22)
April 26. F.....	Lot's Greed (Gen. 13: 10-13)
April 27. S.....	Live at Peace (Rom. 12: 18-21)
April 28. S.....	Abraham, a Good Man (Gen. 18: 17-21)

TIME.—1918 B.C.

PLACES.—Bethel, in Canaan, and Sodom, in the Plain of the Jordan.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Abram, and Lot

Introduction

Sometime after Abram and his people entered the land of Canaan, a famine developed; and inasmuch as he was headed in that direction, he evidently decided to go on into the land of Egypt in order to escape the ravages of the famine. There is no indication that he had any word from the Lord regarding that move; and it is fair to assume that the fellowship between Jehovah and himself was greatly weakened, if not

practically broken, while the patriarch was in a foreign land. (Cf. Elimelech and Naomi under similar circumstances, as set forth in the Book of Ruth.) When Jehovah leads a person into a given situation, either directly, as in the case of Abram, or providentially, as in our day, he is amply able to take care of him, if he will only remain faithful to him. (Rom. 8: 28; Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

When Abram and his household

reached Egypt, it apparently was not long before he found himself involved in a situation, which could have cost him his beloved wife Sarah, if Jehovah had not intervened. The story of that incident is recorded in Genesis 12: 10-20. It is good to know that the Lord does not always forsake his people when they, for all practical purposes, forsake him. Egypt, at the time Abraham went there, was perhaps the most powerful country in the world; and what would Pharaoh, the ruler of the nation, think of an unimportant wanderer, who had made his way into the rich land of the Nile! Indeed, it did not take Abram along to anticipate that which might happen; and it may have been an even shorter time before he saw his beautiful wife taken from his side, and escorted into the palace of Pharaoh. It is not difficult for one to imagine the feelings of the man who had left his God-given home, for even a temporary sojourn among an alien people.

The story of Abram's experience in Egypt has a place in the Book of Genesis, and it is another demonstration of the truth that the writer of the history selected from among the many available incidents of human interest those occurrences

which show how great Jehovah is. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the writer's aim was to emphasize the fact that the essential drama is divine rather than human. Jehovah, let it be repeated, had a purpose for Abram; and regardless of what the patriarch might do, God's purpose for him would not fail. This is the powerful testimony of the inspired narrative now under consideration; and it is the same kind of evidence which is seen throughout the Old Testament record. It is in the confidence of such a faith that the people of God can move ahead in their service for him, in spite of the unfavorable circumstances which may be about them. This is the spirit which James Russell Lowell endeavored to emphasize, when he wrote *The Present Crisis*, as may be seen in the following lines:

Careless seems the great Avenger;
history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness
'twixt the old systems and the
Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
keeping watch above his own.

The Golden Text

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." There is no better commentary on this passage that Paul's words in Romans 4: 16-22, namely, "For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom he believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were. Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sa-

rah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he has promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness."

The Interpreter's Bible points out that Paul's words do not mean that Abraham's faith was a good work by which he saved himself; but that his faith was the basis of his obedience. The circumcision which Jehovah commanded Abraham to perform was only a sign or seal of the righteousness which he had through faith, before the covenant which God made with him was ratified. (Read Rom. 4: 9-15.) Abraham therefore was justified by faith four hundred and thirty years before the law of Moses existed!

The Apostle Paul elaborates further on this question in the follow-

ing words: "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel before unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed. So then they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we

might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3: 7-14.)

There isn't anything in the entire Old Testament that helped and heartened the earliest Christians more than this obscure statement hidden away in Genesis. Not only did Paul find it a comfort, but James (2: 23) tells us: "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." In this incident or experience of Abraham's they have something very real and solid underneath their feet, which to them was the very heart of religion, its whole meaning. Abraham believed God and assumed that he meant what he said though long years passed before anything seemed to come of his promise. But God was watching and pleased. "My friend" he called him and blessed him in every way that he said he would. This was faith, this was true religion.

The Text Explained

A Serious Problem and a Deplorable Strife (Gen. 13: 5-7)

And Lot also, who went up with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

It is generally supposed that both Abram and Lot came into possession of much of their wealth while they were in the land of Egypt. But regardless of the source of their wealth, they were both very rich when they returned to Canaan. Abram turned instinctively to the altar at which he had worshipped in the days before, but we have no word about Lot's attitude in that respect. Abram doubtless knew some of the perils which lurk in prosperity; how wealth may destroy the finer feelings of the soul, alienate man from God, and estrange him from his brethren. Happy is the man who knows these things and is prepared in heart and mind before he is involved in the many problems which wealth is heir to.

And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

This is further implication that these men obtained much of their wealth while in Egypt; for they had

no such problem before their sojourn in that country. But now the possession of such flocks and herds prevented Abram and Lot from continuing to dwell together. The increasing need of pasturage and water must have been great, and that, of course, resulted in a problem which they had not had before; but it was a problem which would have to be met.

And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

It appears that the strife which arose over the situation now before us originated with and was confined to the two sets of herdsmen; but it is obvious that it would eventually spread to the owners of the cattle if something was not done about it. Strife like fire, if allowed to smolder, is in constant danger of bursting forth into a flame. (Eph. 4: 3, 32.)

The difficulty which the herdsmen of Abram's and Lot's cattle were having was further emphasized by the fact that there were other people then dwelling in the land. We saw in our last lesson that the Canaanite was already in the land when Abram arrived. (Gen. 12: 6.)

Both they and the Perizzite were two of the tribes which Jehovah promised to drive out the land so that Abram's seed could dwell there. (Ex. 33: 1, 2.) The mention of these two tribes was probably made to show another reason why Abram and Lot could not continue to dwell together: land would also be needed for the Canaanite and the Perizzite. And then, too, it is very probable that Abram realized the danger which would result to them if these strangers were allowed to know of the strife which had arisen. And so, both the honor of God and their own protection demanded that the strife not be allowed to continue.

A Generous Offer and a Selfish Choice

(Gen. 13: 8-13)

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as thou goest unto Zoar. So Lot chose him all the Plain of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. And Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners against Jehovah exceedingly.

Abram, who had befriended Lot, and who had made it possible for him to be in the land of Canaan, waived his right to tell his kinsman what to do, and begged that there be no strife between them. As already indicated, he doubtless knew that strife, if allowed to continue, would spread to the extent that both of them would almost certainly be involved in it; and he urged therefore that the dispute be settled at once. The motive which Abram advanced for getting the matter adjusted was

that they were brethren. They were of the same family, worshipped the same God in the same way, and were enjoying the same blessings which he provided for them. Why, then, should they permit strife to exist between their servants, and which would eventually be between them, if immediate steps for its settlement were not taken? There are many strife-torn congregations and alienated brethren today who could be enjoying peace, if they would but recognize the example of Abram, and manifest the same generous spirit which characterized him. (2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

The conduct of Abram on this occasion was not only the kind which will make for peace; it was also generous and condescending to an extraordinary degree. His faith thoroughly sustained him in this emergency. He had doubtless learned from his experience in Egypt that no one needs to descend to deceit, in order to obtain that which is best for him. The true child of God can afford to be magnanimous, as indeed he should be; for God has promised to bless him. When it comes to the place that strife is unavoidable in a given situation, then let the situation be changed at once; for no secular gain can compensate for the loss of peace. (Matt. 5: 9; Heb. 12: 14.)

Abram therefore, feeling sure that Jehovah would keep his promises, called on Lot to take his choice of the land which was before them, and to leave him in peace, since it seemed impossible for them to continue to live together as they had in the past. This magnanimous proposal of Abram exemplified in the starlight age of the world many of the principles which are enjoined upon us, who are living in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. For example, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6: 33.) "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." (Phil. 2: 3, 4.)

As we think of the relationship which had existed between Abram

and Lot since they left Ur of the Chaldees some years before, and meditate upon the experiences which had characterized them, both in Canaan and in the land of Egypt, we naturally would expect better things of Lot. The highmindedness of Abram should have been met with equal magnanimity on the part of Lot; but it does not always follow that generosity meets its own likeness in others. The selfish sometimes even take advantage of such a characteristic, call it weakness, and fall to lower depths in its presence. This was a crucial moment in the life of Lot, and he was unequal to the occasion; his character was supremely tested, and the result has been for ever stamped upon the pages of history.

The place where Abram and Lot were living at the time of their separation was between Bethel and Ai, and they would therefore look westward upon the rugged hills of Judaea, and then eastward upon the fertile plains of the Jordan. The contrast must have been impressive, sufficiently so to sway the judgment of Lot, and bring him under the power of selfishness. The description of the land which has been described as the "Plain of the Jordan," or, as the margin has it, *the Circle of the Jordan*, has apparently been somewhat obscured by the rendering of the text, as we have it. Adam Clarke quotes a version which puts it this way: "But before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, it was, as thou goest to Zoar, well watered, like the garden of the Lord, and like the land of Egypt." This is to say that the Jordan watered the plain about it, just as the four neighboring rivers watered the garden of Eden (Gen. 2: 10), and the Nile overflowed the land of Egypt. Zoar was a town east of the Jordan, which could hardly be seen from the place where Abram and Lot were at that time. (See map.)

The reason why Lot failed to meet Abram's generosity with equal highmindedness is obvious; the world had taken possession of his heart. Egypt, which apparently had been a discipline to Abram, had evidently been a temptation to Lot. His imagination while he was there had seemingly been inflamed by the

sight of wealth, beyond a mere dream. His soul had been taken captive by the desire to become rich; and now the opportunity had come to him to satisfy that desire. There is no wonder that Jesus taught his disciples to pray that they not be led into temptation. These Old Testament lessons should mean more to us today, than the mere review of ancient history. They can teach us some wonderful lessons, if we will only manifest the desire to learn them.

Abram relied upon the righteousness of God, and remained where Jehovah had led him; but Lot, moved on closer and closer to wickedness. The material blessings which he sought were soon to be accompanied by moral blight. It is easy for us to see the mistakes of Lot, but it is not so easy for us to see that his actions have many moral counterparts. There are professed Christians today who often choose their homes in localities, simply for the scenery, social advantages, and other material considerations; without once inquiring about the spiritual opportunities which they must have, if they are to please God. The result which usually follows such attitudes is the loss of children to worldliness and polite indifference.

Lot could not have been wholly ignorant of the reputation of Sodom, or if he was, he could easily have inquired about the place before making his decision to go there to live. But, with his outlook on life, he was in no mood for anything like that. Worldly advantages were uppermost in his mind, and he had no disposition to minimize them. He saw the fertile plain of the Jordan, and the magnificent opportunities for material increase which it afforded; and he, accordingly, conveniently overlooked the character of the inhabitants of the city where he would live. In other words, he had a keen eye for material interests, but a rather dim vision regarding his spiritual needs. Peter tells us that these things later became the means of trying his soul. "And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul

from day to day with their lawless deeds)." Lot's case was a demonstration of the truth that men must reap what they sow. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

The Reward of the Righteous

(Gen. 13: 14-18)

And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it. And Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah.

It is, of course, impossible for us to know the thoughts which passed through the mind of Abram, after Lot left him; and especially after he

chose Sodom for his future home. There is no reason to think that Abram had any doubt in his own mind regarding the proposal which he had made to his nephew, but often after a great moral decision has been made, the one responsible for it is tempted to review the events and ask himself, did I do the right thing about it?

It is evident from Acts 7: 5 that the promise to give the land of Canaan to Abram, meant that his seed, and not Abram personally would possess it. Their continual possession of it was conditioned upon their faithfulness. (Deut. 30: 17, 18; 1 Kings 9: 6, 7; 2 Kings 21: 8.) When God makes a promise it will be fulfilled upon the conditions and terms and we will see Abraham's seed enter the land of promise, although they refused to enter when they were first urged to do so. (Deut. 1: 19-26.)

We can get a great lesson from the moving of the tents of Lot and Abram: the one moved his to a place of wickedness, while the other relocated his in a city which proved to be a great blessing to him.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What apparent mistake did Abram make soon after reaching the land of Canaan?
What should he have done under such circumstances?
What lesson is there in this for us?
Tell something of Abram's experience while in the land of Egypt.

The Golden Text

In what sense are we to understand the words of this text, or how did Paul interpret them?
Why was Abraham's faith reckoned unto him for righteousness?
What lesson is there in all of this for us?

A Serious Problem and a Deplorable Strife

How did Abram and Lot probably come into possession of much of their great wealth?
What attitudes did each of them manifest?
What are some of the perils of great riches?
What problem did these two men find in common when they returned to Canaan?
Why did Abram realize that the strife between his servants and those of Lot be settled?

A Generous Offer and a Selfish Choice

What steps did Abram take to settle the dispute which had arisen between their servants?
What great motive characterized his efforts?
What lesson is there in this for the Lord's people today?
What effect did Abram's faith have in the situation now before us?
Why can the true child of God always be magnanimous under similar circumstances?
What great example has Abram left for the Lord's people of this age?
Why did Lot manifest such a different attitude from that of Abram?
Where were Abram and Lot living at the time of this lesson and what was said of the land?
What does selfishness always do for its possessor?
In what directions did the two men move on the occasion of this lesson?
Show how Lot's mistake is so often repeated by some of the Lord's people today?
Why didn't Lot investigate the conditions in Sodom before moving there?
What great principle did he demonstrate?

The Reward of the Righteous

What are some of the thoughts which must have passed through Abram's mind after Lot left him?

Was the land of Canaan given to Abram personally? Give reasons for your answer.
What always happens when God makes a promise?

How did the children of Abraham later react toward their opportunity of entering the land?
What lesson can we get from the movements of the tents of Abram and Lot?

Lesson V—May 5, 1968

SARAH, A FAITHFUL WIFE

Lesson Text

Gen. 12: 11-14; 17: 15, 16; 18: 9-15

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into E'-gypt, that he said unto Sa'-rai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

12 And it will come to pass, when the E'-gypt'-tians shall see thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

13 Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee.

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into E'-gypt, the E'-gypt'-tians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sa'-rai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sa'-rai, but Sarah shall her name be.

16 And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a *mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

9 And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, *and* well stricken in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

12 And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

13 And Je'-ho'-vah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old?

14 Is anything too hard for Je'-ho'-vah? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well.*” (1 Pet. 3: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Pet. 3: 5, 6.

Daily Bible Readings

April 29. M..... Abraham Marries (Gen. 13: 27-32)
April 30. T..... Sarah, a Barren Woman (Gen. 16: 1-6)
May 1. W..... Sarah Is Promised a Son (Gen. 17: 15-21)
May 2. T..... An Allegory (Gal. 4: 21-31)
May 3. F..... Sarah and Hagar (Gen. 16: 7-14)
May 4. S..... Sarah's Name (Gen. 17: 15-20)
May 5. S..... Death of Sarah (Gen. 23: 1-20)

TIME.—1921-1897 B.C.

PLACES.—Egypt and Canaan.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Abraham, and Sarah.

Introduction

Bible students, generally speaking, are familiar with the journey of Abram and Sarai into the land of

Egypt. They had lately entered the land of Canaan, where Jehovah had led them; but when a famine devel-

oped, Abram decided to seek relief from its ravages by going down into the land of Egypt, which was at that time one of the richest and most powerful countries in all the world. There is no indication that Abram was curious regarding that famed country, nor is there any reason for thinking that he longed for the associations with the people of Egypt; he was merely trying to escape from a situation which he felt would be to his temporary interest. Abram apparently was not thinking of the long-ranged purposes and plans of God, or of Jehovah's ability to take care of him and his family in times of need; he simply took matters into his own hands, and did that which he thought was best.

But that which Abram evidently did not take into consideration was the fact that he would, in going to a foreign land, bring both himself and his wife into a very dangerous realm of temptation. Abram apparently thought of this, or at least the danger into which he and his wife would possibly face in the country to which they were going; for as they neared the border of Egypt, he mentioned the matter to Sarai. If a person is going in the direction of temptation, it is probably good for him to anticipate it and try to determine the best way to overcome it; but he should never leave God out of the picture. Every child of God should not only try to keep away

from temptation; his daily prayer should be: "Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matt. 6: 13.) While it is probably correct to say that Abram's faith and piety were greatly affected by his sojourn in Egypt; it is a fact worthy of notice that no record of his building an altar to Jehovah is found in the inspired narrative.

However, it is good to know that Abram and Sarai were not destroyed by the unpleasant and unpromising situation into which they walked in Egypt, but it is also very evident that Abram did not learn his lesson well; for practically the same thing was done by him some time later. (Gen. 20: 1-18.) But the over-all picture of Abram and Sarai is one of great interest and profit to those who read and study the Bible. And in approaching the study of Sarai, we know that she was a real person, and that she has many valuable lessons to teach us. It is, or course, well to keep in mind that Sarai lived some two thousand years before the time of Christ, and nearly that much longer before our day, along with the fact that human nature has changed little, if any, across the centuries; we should not forget the fact that many changes in both customs and manners in Bible lands have taken place between Sarai's day and ours.

The Golden Text

"Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well." As is practically always the case, an isolated statement of scripture can best be understood in the light of its context. Peter's words are: "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. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror." (1 Pet. 3: 1-6.)

That which Peter said regarding the attitude of the wives toward their husbands is not a one-sided matter; for in the very next verse, the apostle says, "Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with the wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Pet. 3: 7.) But notwithstanding the fact of the mutual responsibili-

ties of husbands and wives, it remains an indisputable fact that God has made the husband the head of the wife. "And unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3: 16; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 8-15; 1 Cor. 11: 3-12; Eph. 5: 22-33.)

Peter's reference to Sarah, in the words of the golden text, was for the purpose of enforcing his teaching regarding the attitude which wives should manifest toward their husbands. Sarah was one of the most distinguished women of the Old Testament period, and her relationship with her husband Abraham sets forth one of the best examples which the apostle could mention

with reference to such duties. There is nothing said in the record of Sarah's life about any desire on her part for outward adorning; but there is much on the subject of her kindness and respect for her husband. The primary idea in the term "lord," with which Sarah apparently habitually addressed Abraham, is that of authority; and the implication is that she respectfully acknowledged that it was Abraham's right to rule the household, and that it was her duty to respect that right. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Sarah recognized the fact that she had, by divine decree, been placed under the authority of Abraham; and that the use of the appellation in question was her way of acknowledging it.

The Text Explained

Sarah As a Beautiful and True Woman

(Gen. 12: 11-14)

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: and it will come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they will say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake, and that my soul may live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

We learn from a later part of the Genesis record that Sarah was indeed related to her husband before their marriage. "And moreover she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife; and it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother." (Gen. 20: 12, 13.) Sarah was ten years younger than Abram, and she was, at the time of this lesson, in the prime of her life. The earliest mention of her is found in Genesis 11: 29, just

before she left her native home, Ur of the Chaldees, to accompany her husband and others to go into the land of Canaan. (Gen. 11: 27-32.)

It is reasonable to suppose that Sarai was deeply touched when she was called upon to leave her other relatives, or at least close friends; but there is nothing in the inspired record to indicate, or even to suggest, that she was ever unwilling to accompany her husband wherever he wanted her to go, or that she in any way ever hindered his progress in whatever he proposed to do. Some one has observed that the outstanding quality by which she lives in our memory is the steadfastness of her devotion. From morning till evening, in storm and in calm, in shadow and in sunshine, in the flush of youth and amid the falling leaves of autumn, Sarai was always by her husband Abraham's side. Prosperity did not divorce them; adversity did not divide them; while time served only to deepen the intensity of their marital relationship.

When the scene of this section of the lesson text opens before us, Abram and Sarai were having an experience which they evidently had not anticipated, namely, a famine in the land; and it apparently occurred to Abram that, inasmuch as he was responsible for the well-being of his household, it

would be better if he would take his family and go where he could find plenty, and remain there until the famine in his new homeland was over. If he actually asked Sarai, at the time they first began their wanderings from his father's house, as Genesis 20: 13 seems to imply, that she speak of him among strangers as her brother, then his request at the time of this lesson was but a reminder of the original "favor" which he sought from her. There is nothing in the record to indicate that Sarai had previously been called upon to have part in this deliberate deception; but as she and Abraham neared the land of Pharaoh, her husband began to fear that the roving eyes of the men of that country, who were on the lookout for wives for their king, might fall upon Sarai's beautiful face, and comely form; and desiring her for another wife for Pharaoh, they would not hesitate to get rid of the inconvenient husband. This, apparently, was in the mind of Abram, when he asked her to speak of him as her brother.

In speaking of one of the sources of corruption in the earth, the writer of the Book of Genesis says, "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply upon the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose." (Gen. 6: 1, 2.) The women referred to in the passage just quoted were called "fair"; but it is interesting to note that the term for *fair* in that passage is different from the one which was used to describe Sarai. The Hebrew word for "fair" in Genesis 6: 2 is *tobe*, and it is defined by Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*Hebrew and English Lexicon*) to mean pleasant or agreeable to the senses; while the original word in the text now under consideration is *yapheh*, and means, according to the same authority, beautiful, that is, both Sarai's face and bodily form were very beautiful. There may not be any material difference in the meaning of the two original terms; but if there is any difference, it will probably be seen in a contrast between the development of the sensuous nature, on the one hand, and

that of the soul or spirit, on the other.

In commenting on the unhappy and perilous position in which Sarai was placed by her husband's selfish request, the editor of *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* says, "A more terrible strain upon a woman's conjugal love is not to be conceived. Yet this noble woman stood the strain. She surrendered herself to the solacing of her husband's despair. To bring him peace of mind she acceded to his desire. She consented to a deception; but it was a deception that led right down into a deep vault of self-sacrifice. Sarah is one of the finest specimens of tenacious married life that it is possible to meet. Certainly Abraham ought to have been the one to shield and protect his wife from the evil that he knew her beauty would suggest; instead of this he practically handed her over to Pharaoh and Abimelech in turn by saying, 'She is my sister.' But although the faith of Abraham failed, the faithfulness of God did not fail, and he promptly rescued Sarah from the perilous position, and averted disaster."

A Change in Name and a Gracious Promise

(Gen. 17: 15, 16)

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her.

The opening paragraph of the chapter from which this section of the lesson text is taken records the account of the change in Abram's name. "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee." (Gen. 17: 4, 5.) Anyone who is a careful reader of the Bible will be impressed with the great importance which is everywhere attached to names. It frequently happened in the Old Testament period, and during the time of the New Testament, too, that a person's name was

changed to another, because it no longer adequately described his character or work. Jacob, for example, was at first a "heelcatcher" (Gen. 25: 24-26, and marginal note); but when he became a man whom God could use in his service, his name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32: 22-28). Jesus knew that the name "Simon" would not be suitable for the man who would one day cease his wavering and become as stable as the rock; and so he said to him, "Thou art Simon . . . thou shalt be called . . . Peter." (John 1: 42.) The same thing also happened to Barnabas who, at first was called Joseph, as may be seen by reading Acts 4: 36, 37.

Thus, a change in one's name, especially when God made the change, indicated a new circumstance in the life of the individual involved. This was true in the case of Sarai, as the text now before us plainly implies. There must have been a distinct difference between the names which were given to Abraham's wife, but that information has not been clearly revealed to us. The marginal reading for "Sarah" is *Princess*, but we are not told what "Sarai" signified. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, in their *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, seem to think that the term from which we have "Sarai" was the name of a barren mountain; and if that was true, then the name may have had some connection with the previous barren condition of this woman. It is sufficient, of course, for us to know that Jehovah made the change in names, and that there was a reason for it. Sarah enjoys a unique place in Bible history, as may be seen by reading that which the Inspired Volume says about her. (Cf. Gal. 4: 21-31.)

The portion of the lesson text now under consideration contains the first direct statement which definitely said that the mother of Abraham's heir would be Sarah herself. Before his information was given to Abraham, the language concerning the birth of the child was couched in more or less general terms; and that was probably the reason for the action of Sarai and Abram in trying to obtain the child through Hagar, who was Sarai's handmaid. (Gen. 16: 1-16.) But with the language of

the text now before us, there could be no doubt about who the child's mother would be. The same promise which was made to Abraham regarding kings and nations was repeated for Sarah, at the time of this lesson.

The Reaction of Sarah to Her Prospective Motherhood

(Gen. 18: 9-15)

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in age; and it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, whom am old? Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

The pronoun "they" with which this section of the lesson text begins had reference to the angels who visited Abraham by the "oaks of Mamre." (Gen. 18: 1-8.) The patriarch did not recognize them as being angels, but evidently thought that they were men. (Heb. 13: 2.) Abraham asked them to stay with him awhile, and, with their consent, he, Sarah, and a servant prepared a meal for them. The purpose of the angels in visiting Abraham at this time was to assure him that the time for the fulfillment of the promise of a heir was drawing near. It has been some twenty-four years since the promise of an heir had first been made to Abraham, but that great man never lost faith in its ultimate fulfillment, although he did enter into an arrangement, suggested by Sarah, whereby they thought the promise of a son could be brought to maturity. (Gen. 16: 1.)

It must have been somewhat surprising to Abraham to have his

guests, who were strangers to him, inquire about his wife, and that, along with the conversation regarding the fulfillment of the long-awaited promise at a specified time, must have caused him to feel that his visitors were more than ordinary men. Bible students tell us that the women's apartments were in the back of the tents, and that they were separated from those of the men by a thin partition; and, with that kind of an arrangement, it would be relatively easy for Sarah to hear the conversation.

The ages of Abraham and Sarah at the time of this lesson were ninety-nine and eighty-nine, respectively; and viewing the matter from the human standpoint, they must have concluded long ago that Sarah would never herself become the mother of a son; or, at least, that appears to have been the way that Sarah felt about the question. But with the promise contained in the preceding section of the lesson text, it is difficult to think that Abraham himself doubted the motherhood of Sarah. The writer of Hebrews says, "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised." (Heb. 11: 11.)

Bible students are aware of the favorable place which Sarah occupies in the allegory, contained in Galatians 4: 21-31. She must have shared, to some extent at least, the faith which was Abraham's, after the incident of the text which is now under consideration. The apostle Paul, in commenting on the faith of Abraham, says, "For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom he believed,

even God, who giveth life from the dead, and calleth things that are not, as though they were. Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. 4: 16-21.)

The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that this is the kind of faith which people today must have, both in becoming the Lord's people and in living the Christian life, if they are to be well pleasing to God. (Read the entire fourth chapter of Romans, and Hebrews 11: 6.) There are commandments and requirements in the New Testament which demand such faith, in order to believe them. The waters of baptism, for example, look as barren as Sarah's womb, as far as human reason goes; but the Lord commanded baptism as a condition of salvation, and that settles the question with those who have the kind of faith which Abraham had—the only kind of faith that saves. (Heb. 10: 25; 1 Cor. 11: 2-16.)

There are several Hebrew words for "laugh" in the Old Testament, and it appears that one will have to consider the context, before he can be certain regarding the attitude of the laughing. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed, and it seems that there was a degree of disbelief in the laughter (cf. Gen. 17: 17-19 and the text now under consideration); but after the child was born, Sarah's was a laughter of joy. (Gen. 21: 6; cf. Luke 1: 46-48.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Under what circumstances did Abram and Sarai journey to Egypt?
What important fact did Abram apparently overlook?

What should our attitude be toward temptations?
How should we approach the study of the life and character of Sarai?

The Golden Text

Against what background were the words of this text written?

What mutual attitude should husbands and wives maintain toward each other?
 What relationship has God ordained for them?
 What was Peter's purpose in writing the words of the golden text?
 What was Sarai's understanding of the term "lord"?

Sarah As a Beautiful and True Woman
 What was the relationship of Abram and Sarai before their marriage?

What request did Abram make of her before they set out on their journeys?
 What is your idea of the propriety of that request?

What can you say of the loyalty of Sarai to her husband?

What was probably the overruling motive which prompted the journey into Egypt?
 Why did Abram want Sarai to speak of him as her brother?

What effect must Abram's request have had on her?

A Change in Name and a Gracious Promise

Why were the names of Abram and Sarai changed?

What does the Bible teach with reference to the changes which were made in people's names?

What was the apparent difference between the names "Sarai" and "Sarah"?
 What truth was made known for the first time to Abram in this portion of the lesson text?

The Reaction of Sarah to Her Prospective Motherhood

Who were the visitors in the home of Abraham and Sarah at the time of this portion of the lesson text?

Why did they visit the couple at this particular time?

What initial impression must have been made on Abraham?

How was Sarah impressed when she heard their announcement?

How old were Abraham and Sarah at this time?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to the faith of Sarah?

What kind of faith did Abraham have?

Does God expect the same kind of faith on our part today? Give reasons for your answer.

What are some of the commands and requirements of the New Testament which demand such faith?

Why did Sarah laugh when she heard the angel's message regarding her son?

Lesson VI—May 12, 1968

JACOB, PRINCE OF GOD

Lesson Text

Gen. 28: 18-22; 35: 9-12

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Je-ho'-vah will be my God,

22 Then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt

give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Pad'-dan-a-ram, and blessed him.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Is'-ra-el shall be thy name: and he called his name Is'-ra-el.

11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins:

12 And the land which I gave unto Abraham and I'-saac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel."*
 (Gen. 32: 28.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 25: 27-34.

Daily Bible Readings

May 6. M..... Generations of Isaac (Gen. 25: 19-34)
 May 7. T..... Jacob Deceives Isaac (Gen. 27: 5-17)
 May 8. W..... Jacob Flees (Gen. 27: 41-46)
 May 9. T..... Jacob's Visit at Bethel (Gen. 28: 10-17)

May 10. F.....	Jacob's Vow (Gen. 28: 18-22)
May 11. S.....	Jacob's Wives (Gen. 29: 21-30)
May 12. S.....	Jacob's Children (Gen. 35: 22-27)

TIME.—1779-1738 B.C.

PLACE.—LUZ OR Bethel.

PERSONS.—God and Jacob.

Introduction

Abraham, as all Bible students know, was in reality the head of the Hebrew race, and it was through him that all the great promises came; yet when we speak of the founder of the "Jewish" race, the reference is to Jacob, rather than to Abraham. The Jewish people are called "Israelites," rather than *Abrahamites*. One of the reasons for this is that other peoples descended from Abraham, but only the Israelites came from Jacob. The "wild son of the desert," as Ishmael is sometimes called, along with his descendants, were sons of Abraham; as were also the Midianites.

But Jacob was the typical "Jew," and his life was the epitome of that great people who are found in every country, and yet, in a very true sense, belong to none. They are the people who gave us our loftiest religious literature, and yet are a by-word everywhere, because of their scheming and their love for money. It is only in Jacob that we can understand these people; the extremes in them which startle us are all to be found in him. He was the greatest schemer of his time; and although his beginning was not so good, he came to have that deep spirituality and far-reaching faith, which are the grandest of all qualities, and make one capable of the highest culture which is possible for human spirits. Jacob, like his descendants, spent a great part of his life in exile, amid the trying conditions of toil, hardships, and sorrow; and, like the people who owe their existence to him, he was inalienably attached to the land of Canaan, which was his only by the promise of God and the graves of his beloved dead.

The story of God's special dealings with Jacob begins with the lesson now before us. His life prior to this had not been very favorable; and it is only indirectly that we are able to gather anything of his relation to God. But from this time onward, as the inspired narrative unfolds itself, we shall see the building of his character, as it is tested and trained by the wisdom and love of God. The story of Jacob's life may be described as one of discipline and mercy. This son of Isaac reaped again and again the fruits of his sins; but as we read on we are permitted to see that which the grace of God can do for one of the most naturally unattractive, and even forbidding, temperaments.

J. Oswald Sanders points out that the manner in which God dealt with the educative aspect of Jacob's life, affords a glowing example of Jehovah's undiscouraged perseverance with an unlovely character. Although there was little in Jacob to merit it, it is a recorded fact that Jehovah lavished upon him an unwearied and uncompromising love. God continued to love Jacob, but he never condoned his sin. Instead, he allowed Jacob to go his own way, and learn the bitter lessons of human independence. His selfishness became his own chastening rod, and he at last maneuvered himself into a crisis in which he was willing to listen to God. Thus, Jacob's life illustrates, not so much the perseverance of the saints, but rather the perseverance of Jehovah. God knows no unfinished task, as Paul clearly affirms in *Philippians 1: 6*. The life of every child of God is filled with evidence of the tenacity and tireless patience of God's matchless love.

The Golden Text

The words of this text are substantially repeated in the main text, and they will be considered there, when we reach them; but in the

meantime, we should make an effort to apply the principle which is involved in the change in one's name to ourselves. There is, after all,

something in a name. A rose by another name would smell just as sweet, but, alas! it would not be a rose. A name is often like a key—it unlocks hidden treasures, and opens doors to interesting discoveries. We often learn something of the characteristics of families by the names which they give to their children. The parents of Abraham Lincoln must have been Bible-reading people, if we can judge by the names which they gave their children, namely, Enoch, Levi, Mordecai, Solomon, Sarah, and Abraham.

Those who are familiar with the New Testament are aware of the fact that there are certain specific designations by which the Lord's people are known; and inasmuch as names are never given carelessly or without a purpose by Jehovah, we should be careful to see to it that the divinely given designations are not bestowed upon us in vain. Five of the New Testament names or titles for the Lord's people are (1) *Disciple*, which literally means a learner, a pupil, or a student, as in school. This, of course, presupposes a teacher, as the following scriptures clearly indicate: Matt. 11: 28, 29; 28: 19, 20; Acts 2: 42. (2) *Believers*: Acts 4: 32; Heb. 11: 6; 2 Tim. 1: 12. (3) *Brethren*: 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21. (4) *Saints*, that is, those who are "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his" (Thayer): John 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20. (5) *Christians*: Acts 11: 26; 26: 28; 1 Pet. 4: 16.

And so, What is your name? Is it disciple? believer? brother? saint? Christian? Can you honestly say that your relation to Christ entitles you to wear these names? The

story is told of a Chinese, a follower of Confucius, a man of high ideals, who was living in his native land, and who had become acquainted with a Christian missionary. The missionary gave the Chinese in question a copy of the New Testament, with the request that he read it. After carefully reading it through, and reflecting on that which he had learned, he returned the Testament to the missionary. And upon being asked what he thought of the book, the Chinese replied, "It is a very wonderful book; but I must say that according to the teaching which it contains, you are not a Christian." Being somewhat embarrassed, the missionary asked, "Just what do you mean by that statement?" The Chinese then quietly replied, "I read in this book that a Christian is not anxious, but instead he should cast his care upon God. You do a great deal of worrying, and, in fact, you told me yourself that you sometimes cannot sleep at night because of your anxiety. This book also says that a Christian forgives those who sin against him; but I remember that on one occasion you told me that a certain man had injured you, and that as a result you no longer speak to him when you meet him on the street. Thus, with unrelenting force, the Chinese continued to point out startling differences between the teaching of the New Testament and the life of the missionary; and the incident is all the more significant, since the average missionary is freer from such inconsistent practices, than the average Christian here at home.

The Text Explained

A Memorial and a Vow

(Gen. 28: 18-22)

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come

again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

All of chapter 27 and the first seventeen verses of chapter 28, of the Book of Genesis, should be read before beginning the study of this section of the lesson text; and when that is done, one will be able to see why Jacob was near the city of Luz on the occasion now before us. He had defrauded his brother Esau, and

was forced to flee for his life. His mother had suggested to his father that her life was unhappy because of the wives of Esau; and that led Isaac to charge Jacob not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, but to go to the house of his mother's father in Paddan-aram, and take a wife from there. He then blessed his younger son, and he was soon on his way which took him by the city of Luz.

It was during the night while he slept, with his head resting upon a stone for a pillow, that he had his wonderful dream of the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. When he awoke he was *afraid* (the very same word from which we have "reverend" in Psalm 111: 9), and said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." There is a great lesson in this for us; because all too few of us stand in awe of God, and tremble at his word. (Isa. 66: 2.)

When Jacob arose from sleep the next morning, he took the stone which had been beneath his head, raised it to an upright position, and consecrated it into a memorial for the purpose of marking the spot where he had seen the vision. (Gen. 35: 14, 15; Josh. 4: 8, 9.) Dods observes that Jacob felt, vivid as the impression on his mind then was, the vision would tend to fade; and it was for that reason that he wanted something more enduring to remind him of it. (Josh. 4: 19-24.) Dr. Dods further notes that "one great secret of the growth of character is the art of prolonging the quickening power of right ideas, of perpetuating just and inspiring impressions. And he who despises the aid of all external helps for the accomplishment of this object is not likely to succeed."

The word "Beth-el" means *house of God*, and, as the name of a town, it is mentioned in the Bible more often than any other, except Jerusalem. It is fair to conclude from the text now before us that the former name of the place was "Luz"; and it is but natural, from the circumstance now before us, to understand that one name replaced the other. But when we read Joshua 16: 2, it

appears that Beth-el and Luz were different places. It is quite certain that Jacob slept outside the city of Luz, and that he set the stone up where he had slept, all of which means that Beth-el was outside the city limits of Luz; and the probability is that the two places were, in time, merged into one.

Inasmuch as the vow which Jacob made on the occasion now before us is thought by some to have been characterized by selfishness on his part, and therefore injurious to his integrity, it is probably in order that we consider the question regarding it somewhat at length. Jamieson thinks that the "if" should be changed to "since"; and if he is correct in his view of the matter, it will be easy to see that the language is a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise which God had made to him. The following is Jamieson's view of the question now before us:

"But it should be borne in mind that it was *in consequence* of the vision, and of the promises made to him during the night, in the most unexpected manner, by the Divine Being, that he vowed his vow the next morning—a vow indicative of his profound feeling of gratitude, as well as of reverence, and intended to be simply responsive to the terms in which the grace of his heavenly Benefactor and Guardian was tendered. Nay, so far is he from betraying a selfish and worldly spirit, the moderation of his desires is remarkable; and the vow, when placed in a just light, will be seen to evince the simplicity and the piety of Jacob's mind. Our translators have given rise to the mistaken impressions that so generally prevail in regard to Jacob's vow, by the insertion of the word 'then,' in verse 21. But the apodosis properly begins in the verse following—'then this stone,' etc. The words of Jacob are not to be considered as implying a doubt, far less as stating the condition or terms on which he would dedicate himself to God. Let 'if' be changed into 'since,' and the language will appear a proper expression of Jacob's faith—an evidence of his having truly embraced the promise."

That which has just been said, both in the text itself and Jamie-

son's remarks concerning it, enables us to see something of Jacob's response to the marvelous vision which had been vouchsafed to him. He was overawed and afraid; but his whole being was aroused by the vision and the response was to the God who was drawing him. Jacob gathered himself up, as it were, and resolutely determined to dedicate himself to Jehovah. He did not, as so often we do when we come to see God's will for us, allow the impressions to wear off, and do nothing. (James 4: 17.) Jacob came to an immediate decision; and it was equal to the occasion. The religion of the New Testament demands this kind of an attitude; for no man ever found himself, by accident or good fortune, in the kingdom of Christ. (Josh. 24: 15; Matt. 28: 18-20; Acts 2: 36-41.) Jacob both vowed a vow, and set up a stone; or, to say the same thing in another way, he made an inward resolution, and set to it an outward seal. He placed in Beth-el, for all men to see, a monument of his having met with God.

Jacob's promise to give a tenth of all that God should give him marks the second time that such a tenth is mentioned in the Bible. The first reference to the subject was when Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek. (Gen. 14: 17-20.) The fact that the question of the tenth was mentioned for the first time in connection with Abraham does not, in and of itself, prove that such a practice was not engaged in before that time; it simply means that we have no record of it. Whether or not the giving of the tenth by Abraham, and later by Jacob, was the result of the former's action based on a command which he had on the subject, or whether or not he gave it more or less voluntarily, is not the important question; the thing which counts is that it was pleasing to God, and the significance of the act was made a Part of the New Testament record. (Heb. 7: 1-10; 8: 6.)

The seriousness of making vows to Jehovah is clearly set forth in the Bible, namely, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not Pay." (Eccles. 5: 4, 5.) The term

"vow," as already indicated, is used in the sense of a pledge or promise to do something; a commitment. The Lord's people must exercise caution in their speech, and they must likewise exercise caution in their promises. The reference in the passage just quoted was probably to a difficult or distressing situation in which one sometimes finds himself. It is often the case that one, during his anxious moments or temporary excitement, will promise the Lord that he will do so and so, if he is delivered from such troubles. There is, of course, nothing wrong in making commitments under such conditions, provided the promises are reasonable and within one's power to keep; but no one should ever be guilty of making rash pledges or pledges which he has no intention of keeping. When the writer of Ecclesiastes said that it is better not to vow, than to vow and not keep the promise, he was not encouraging people not to make commitments; he was simply warning against rashness in such matters. (2 Pet. 2: 20-22; Luke 14: 28-35.)

From Jacob to Israel

(Gen. 35: 9, 10)

And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

The matter of changing the name of Jacob took place just before he met his brother Esau, and the circumstances surrounding the event were as follows: "And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou

bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Gen. 32: 22-28.)

After the meeting with Esau, Jacob and his family went on to Succoth, and then to Shechem, in the land of Canaan. It was at the latter place that Jacob's daughter Dinah was defiled, and the men of the city were slain by two of her brothers. God then told Jacob to go on up to Beth-el, build an altar, and dwell there; and it was at the latter place that Jehovah repeated the fact that Jacob's name was being changed to Israel. The long years of discipline had made a new man of Jacob, but before his name was changed, the angel asked him, What is thy name? and in giving his answer, the changed man had to come to grips with the fact that he had been a heel-catcher or supplanter (Gen. 25: 24-26, and marginal note). Jacob was therefore made to confess the sin and shame of his life; but when that was done he was ready for the blessing which God had in store for him. In commenting on the incident now before us, W. H. Griffith Thomas says:

"Let us mark carefully the description: 'There wrestled a man *with him*.' It is sometimes read as though Jacob wrestled with the man, and from it is derived the lesson of prevailing prayer. But this is to mistake altogether the point of the story. 'There wrestled a man *with him*.' The wrestling was an endeavor on God's part to break down Jacob's opposition, to bring him to an end of himself, to take him from all self-trust, all confidence in his own cleverness and resource, to make him know that Esau is to be overcome and Canaan obtained not by craft or flattery, but by Divine grace and power. There is no lesson at all on prevailing prayer. Far from it; quite the opposite. The self-life in Jacob is to be overcome, the old nature is to be conquered, the planning is to be rendered futile, and the resourcefulness made impotent. Instead of gaining Canaan by cleverness he must receive it as a gift from God.

Instead of winning he must accept it from Divine grace."

It was a long, hard struggle; but Jacob finally prevailed. The lesson which we should learn is that we are never ready to receive the blessings which God is able and wants to bestow upon us, as long as we trust in ourselves. The very first condition of discipleship, according to Jesus, is self-denial. "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.) It is when we are willing to have our names changed to disciples, believers, brethren, saints, and Christians, and really live up to the true meaning of these designations, that we are ready to enjoy the blessings we are capable of receiving.

Jacob Formally Linked with Abraham and Isaac

(Gen. 35: 11, 12)

And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

From this time onward, the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or Israel, are linked together throughout the history of the Jewish people, and on into the period of the New Testament. The same promises and blessings were to be the lot of Jacob, just as they had been the portion of Abraham and Isaac; and God would be his God, just as he had been theirs. During the course of his second recorded sermon, Peter said, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him." (Acts 3: 13.)

We should not overlook the word "again" in the expression "And God appeared unto Jacob *again*. . . . and blessed him." Reconciliation between Jehovah and the erstwhile supplanter had now been accomplished; and there was no cloud between the patriarch and his God,

and the divine appearance which did not come to him in Shechem, came in Beth-el, where Jehovah first contacted the wanderer, and

brought to the man who had prevailed the blessed assurance of renewed favor and sunshine after the rain.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What unique place does Jacob occupy in the history of the Jewish people?

Why was their name called after him, rather than after Abraham?

In what sense was Jacob a "typical Jew"?

What great change had to be wrought in him before he was acceptable to Jehovah?

When did the story of God's special dealings with him begin?

What great work is illustrated by God's efforts with him?

The Golden Text

Why were the names of Bible people often changed?

What are the principle designations by which the Lord's people today are known?

Why should the followers of Christ ask themselves often the question, "What is my name?"

A Memorial and a Vow

Why is it important to read the full context in preparation for the study of this lesson?

How did Jacob come to be in the vicinity of Luz at the time of this lesson?

Under what conditions did he sleep that night and what dream did he have?

What effect did the dream have upon him?

What is the basic meaning of "afraid" and what lesson is there in this for us?

Why did Jacob raise a memorial at that time and what change in name was made?

What vow did Jacob make and what was the nature of it?

What over-all effect did Jacob's experience at Luz have on him and what lesson for us?

What does the Bible teach with reference to giving a tenth to the Lord?

How should the Lord's people regard the vows which they make?

Is it right for them to make vows?

From Jacob to Israel

When and under what circumstance was the patriarch's name changed from Jacob to Israel?

What probable reason did the angel have for asking Jacob, What is thy name?

What did Jacob have to do in answering that question?

What important lesson did he learn at that time?

Why was the struggle so long and hard before Jacob finally prevailed?

What lesson is in all of this for us in this age of the world?

Jacob Formally Linked with Abraham and Isaac

Why was it essential that the names of these three patriarchs be linked together?

What were the promises which were passed on to Jacob or Israel?

Why did Jehovah tell Jacob that he would be his God?

What use did Peter later make of the Jewish heritage in the three great fathers?

What is the force of "again" in the expression "And God appeared unto Jacob again . . . and blessed him?"

What was Jacob's relationship with Jehovah when the events of this lesson were over?

Lesson VII—May 19, 1968

MOSES, A SERVANT OF GOD

Lesson Text

Ex. 3: 2-8; Heb. 11: 23-26

2 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3 And Mó-ses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 And when Je-ho'-vah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Mó-ses, Mó-ses. And he said, Here am I.

5 And he said, Draw not nigh

hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of I'-saac, and the God of Jacob. And Mó-ses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 And Je-ho'-vah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in E'-gypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver

them out of the hand of the E-gyp'tians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Ca'naan-ite, and the Hit'-tite, and the Am'-or-ite, and the Per'-iz-zite, and the Hi-vite, and Jeb'-u-site.

23 By faith Mó'-ses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was

a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 By faith Mó'-ses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pha'-raoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of E'-gypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And Moses . . . was mighty in his words and works."* (Acts 7: 22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Num. 12: 7, 8.

Daily Bible Readings

May 13. M.....	Birth of Moses (Ex. 2: 1-10)
May 14. T.....	Moses Kills an Egyptian (Ex. 2: 11-15)
May 15. W.....	Moses Flees to Midian (Ex. 2: 15-22)
May 16. T.....	God Calls Moses (Ex. 3: 1-2)
May 17. F.....	Moses Sent to Egypt (Ex. 4: 18-22)
May 18. S.....	Moses Delivers Israel (Ex. 12: 37-42)
May 19. S.....	The Death of Moses (Deut. 34: 1-8)

TIME.—Exodus, 1491 B.C.; Hebrews, A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACES.—Exodus, in the wilderness, near mount Horeb; Hebrews, Rome and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Exodus, Jehovah and Moses; Hebrews, Paul and the Hebrew Christians in Palestine.

Introduction

The record of the life of Moses is divided into three equal periods of forty years each. The first forty years were spent in Egypt, in the palace of Pharaoh; the second, in the wilderness of Midian, with the family of Jethro; and the last, in the work of the Exodus, the encampment at Sinai, and with the wanderings of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness. In commenting on the life of Moses, James Hastings says, "The general impression left on our minds by the life and character of Moses, regarded as a whole, is unquestionably one of extraordinary, almost solitary, grandeur, dignity, and elevation. Wordsworth's lines describe it best:

Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

"There is not a single character in the Old Testament that will bear comparison with it—for purity, for elevation, for power, for pathos. There is only one character in the whole range of history that overtops it; and *that is more than human*—the character of our Lord

Jesus Christ." The ability of Moses, under God, to lead from two to three million slaves out of the land of Egypt, mold them into a great nation, and prepare them for entrance into a new land, is one of the greatest examples of leadership on record. And there is not a civilized nation on earth today, which has not felt the impact of the moral and legal code which Moses was privileged to give the children of Israel.

It is well that we should remember at the very outset of this lesson that Jehovah does not force his intimacies upon people; he grants them only to those who desire them, and who qualify themselves for them. And any one who reads the life and works of Moses, as they are revealed in the Scriptures, will certainly understand that that great man belonged to the inner circle of those who lived in God's presence. When Aaron and Miriam criticized Moses for marrying a woman who they did not approve, and sought to place themselves on a level with him as

prophets of Jehovah, the record says that Jehovah heard that which they said. And then we are told, parenthetically, that "Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth."

The inspired historian continued: "And Jehovah spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tent of meeting. And they three came out. And Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house; with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses." (Num. 12: 1-15.)

The Golden Text

"And *Moses . . . was mighty in his words and works.*" The words just quoted are taken from a part of Stephen's defence before the Sanhedrin which condemned him to death. "But as the time of the promise drew nigh which God vouchsafed unto Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till there arose another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. The same dealt craftily with our race, and ill-treated our fathers, that they should cast out their babes to the end they might not live. At which season Moses was born, and was exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works." (Acts 7: 17-22.)

The faith of Moses' parents, already referred to in this lesson, led them to risk the wrath of the king, while their love for their child enabled them to provide a way of evading the ruler's cruel edict; and it is a fact, worthy of notice, that

Those who are acquainted with the Biblical Record are aware of the fact that the close relationship which Moses enjoyed with God was not brought about in a day; it was a long process of going on to perfection; and as one traces the growth and development of his character, under the guiding hand of Jehovah, he is able to see that his faith was the dominant factor which made him the giant that he came to be. And it appears that the faith which was Moses' first dwelt in his parents, Amram and Jochebed; but, as J. Oswald Sanders points out, a man has little choice in his heredity and environment, but he does play the major role in choosing the type of person which he wants to be. Sooner or later he reaches the forks of the road, and he must choose one of the alternatives which are before him. Or, to express the same thing in another way, he must choose that which coincides with God's eternal purpose, or else the remainder of his life will be characterized with shallows and miseries.

Jehovah rewarded both their faith and their love. Young Moses had the benefit of a home with his parents during his formative years, where he was taught the fear of the God of heaven, and the Hebrew religion; and when the time came for his great decision, these things more than fitted him to turn his back on the Egyptian education which he later received. The early months of Moses' life afford striking examples of God's overruling providence; for it is easy to see that the very river which was meant to destroy his life became the means of saving it. And the agent of his deliverance was the daughter of the king who decreed his death; while the ingenuity of a mother's love secured the guardianship of her own child. Little did she dream that the hope of the world floated in that frail ark among the flags near the banks of the Nile, to which she had committed the care of her darling baby. But the overruling providence of Jehovah is able to make all things work together for good for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8: 28.)

It was indeed a strange irony that Pharaoh's edict finally led to an education for Moses, which was unrivalled for that time; and it was to this that Stephen referred in the words of the golden text. "And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works." Notwithstanding his disclaimer (Ex. 4: 10), Moses must have been endowed with great oratorical powers as a statesman, and, according to Josephus, he was made the general of the armies of Egypt; while tradi-

tion ascribes to him great military victories which were achieved under his leadership. If these things are true, then we can begin to understand something of his ability in organization and the handling of large crowds of people. In the training which he received in Egyptian schools, there must have been, among other things in his curriculum, discipline, patience, and the necessity of making quick decisions. Moses, like Paul, had an educational background which God could bless and use in his work.

The Text Explained

The Appearance of the Burning Bush

(Ex. 3: 2, 3)

And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

If one will read the preceding portion of the Book of Exodus, he will be able to see how Moses came to be in the wilderness of Horeb. Forty years before the time of this lesson, Moses thought that he was ready for the work which God had for him; but in that he was greatly mistaken. His education in Egypt had trained his intellect, but that is not the whole of man; his spirit and attitude also had to be trained. And so, for forty years Moses was enrolled in the "university of the wilderness," where his dealing with sheep made him aware of what it means to be a leader of others. And it was therefore no accident that Moses was at the right place, at the right time, when Jehovah was ready for him to begin his greatest work, that of being a "shepherd," not to sheep, but to the people who are described as the sheep of God's pasture.

Some eminent Bible students (see Smith's Dictionary of the Bible; Adam Clarke, et al) hold that the expression "the angel of Jehovah" is sometimes used to indicate a manifestation of God himself. (See, in addition to the text now before us, Genesis 22: 11, 12.) This same idea is also found in Genesis 18: 2, 22;

19: 1; 32: 24, 30, where Jehovah was apparently manifested as a human being—a man. The angel who was called Jehovah, and who remained with Abraham after the other two went on to Sodom, was very probably the "Word" or Christ. (John 1: 1.) The appearances which have just been referred to are regarded as foreshadowing the Incarnation.

The attention of Moses was arrested by the sight of a burning bush, which was not consumed; and when he turned aside to see it, he heard the voice of Jehovah speaking unto him. When God appeared to any one in Bible times, he had a purpose in mind; and it is interesting to note that he always, in one way or another, made known that purpose. The principle involved in that which has just been said is also just as true of people now, as it was then. This is true because no one can ever know what God's purpose and plan are for him, if he never hears that which Jehovah has to say. There is, of course, no reason for anyone today to think that the Lord will appear to him miraculously; but there is every reason for his expecting to hear his voice in his revealed will, and his providential ministrations.

God's Message to Moses

(Ex. 3: 4-8)

And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place

whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

The wonder of the burning bush, which was not consumed, was sufficient to attract the attention of Moses, and when he turned aside to concentrate his mind upon it, he was richly rewarded. It is indeed a pity that more people today are not attracted to the wonders of God's revealed word; for it is certain that there are no greater wonders to be seen anywhere, than in that Wonderful Volume. The psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119: 18.) The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, when she listened to that which Paul spoke; and he will do the same thing for us, if we will only listen to that which he has revealed. (Acts 16: 14; cf. Luke 24: 45.)

In the preceding section of the lesson text, it is said that "the angel of Jehovah" appeared to Moses; but in this section he is plainly called Jehovah. This fact seems to confirm that which was said earlier, namely, that the angel of Jehovah did sometimes, in the Old Testament Scriptures, indicate a manifestation of God himself. The first thing that Jehovah did, after getting the attention of Moses, was to teach him a lesson of reverence; and there is no greater lesson which we need to learn today, than respect for God and his word. There are far too many people who approach the Bible very much like they do a secular book, or a newspaper; and with that kind of an attitude, it is not surprising that they do not see or learn any more about the Word

of the Lord, than they do. No one who does not show respect for that which the Scriptures say, or, who is not in sympathy with them, is going to learn much of their true meaning. (John 7: 17.)

And when Moses was ready to listen reverently to that which Jehovah had to say, he learned, first of all, about Jehovah's concern for his suffering people. The compassion of the Lord for suffering humanity is a basic factor in every effort which he has made to save them from their bondage, regardless of what the nature of that bondage may have been. All that any one needs to do in order to see that this is true, is to read that which is contained in the Bible. And if this was true with reference to the physical sufferings of his people, such as their oppression in Egypt; then what must his concern be for those who suffer because of their bondage to sin? We, of course, know something of the answer to the question just asked; for it has been revealed to us in the New Testament. (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8; 2 Cor. 5: 21; Luke 15: 1-32.)

"From Faith unto Faith"

(Heb. 11: 23-26)

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward.

The principal facts in the life of Moses, so far as this lesson goes, are recorded in the first few chapters of Exodus and Stephen's address in Acts 7. What we have in Hebrews

11 regarding him may be regarded as a kind of epitome of his life and character. We are plainly told by the writer of the latter epistle that the parents of Moses were motivated by faith in all they did regarding him; and, as already noted in a previous part of this lesson, we are sure that the faith which Moses had

dwelt first in those who loved and cared for him. (2 Tim. 1: 5.) But, as much as his parents loved their child and wanted to keep him with them in their own home, the time came when Moses had to be taken to the royal palace, where he was known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and where he was evidently given every advantage which could be the lot of a king's heir.

When the record in Exodus is read, along with Stephen's address in Acts 7, it will be seen that several years had passed, since the cruel bondage in Egypt began. Jamieson notes that although a single pharaoh is spoken of as the oppressor of the people of the Lord, it is very evident that the expression denotes the powers which ruled Egypt during the entire period referred to. In other words, according to Jamieson, the oppressors included Rameses, the king who began the oppression, and his grandson who followed the reign of the "daughter of Pharaoh," that is, the one who found Moses, and her husband.

According to the authority we are now considering, the oppression of Rameses was somewhat mitigated during the mild and liberal reign of his daughter Thuoris (who found Moses) and her husband Si-Ptha, *the king who died*. (Ex. 2: 23.) But when Thuoris' nephew and successor, Sethos, the grandson of Rameses, ascended the throne, the oppression was renewed in all of its fury. With these facts before us, along with the inspired record which plainly teaches that Moses was regarded as being the son of Pharaoh's daughter (that is, the daughter who succeeded Rameses), it is fair to conclude that Moses would have been the pharaoh who succeeded her and her husband, instead of the nephew Sethos, if he had not refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The basic reason for the momentous decision of Moses to quit the palace of Pharaoh was his faith, or, which is the same thing, his attitude toward the will of God. In speaking of the faith which is acceptable to God, the writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must

he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) Moses, when he made his decision, had reached the period in his life when he was able to evaluate wisely the factors which were involved in it. In dealing with this issue, the author of *Robust in Faith* says,

"The fulcrum on which his decision turned was his attitude toward the will of God and the pitiable plight of his people. Would he selfishly retain his privileged position as son of Pharaoh's daughter, or would he identify himself with Israel in their slavery? Would he choose pomp, power and glory or poverty, obscurity and obloquy? He was at the age when the pleasures of sin were the most fascinating and enticing, when the scales were heavily weighted against his becoming the champion of his people. The allurements of the world of power and glory were tangible and real. The prospects and recompenses of eternity were all in the far distance, intangible except by faith."

There are always two elements in every decision, namely, the negative and the positive; or, which is the same thing, a refusal and an acceptance. (1) *The negative element*: There was something to which Moses said "No" and meant it. A refusal implies two things, namely, (a) strong temptation, and (b) keenness of perception. And in such a crisis, arguments will be made on both sides, for example, God put him where he was, and he could probably serve his people better by remaining where he was; or he could identify himself with his people, and endeavor to secure their freedom from aggression. (Acts 7: 23-28.)

(2) *The positive element*: But Moses did more than say "No"; that alone would not have sufficed. Instead, he refused to do one thing, in order that he might do another. Right living does not consist solely in negatives. We must refuse to do wrong, in order that we may do right; we must refuse, in order to accept. It matters not what success one may enjoy, or what promises the world holds for him, sooner or later God will come into his life; and he must decide for or against him. (Matt. 12: 30.)

Again, let us ask, How did Moses come to make his great decision to

[1] believe that he is, and [2] that

refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter? (1) *There was his faith, which gave him power.* God had already chosen Moses, and the time had come when Moses had to choose God. The faith of Moses did two things for him, namely, (a) *it gave substance to the things he hoped for*, because it rested on God's word rather than on man's, and (b) *it unlocked the treasures of God.* The gospel is the divine statement of what the spiritual world holds for the Lord's people (James 1: 17; Eph. 1: 3); and our faith, if it is what it should be, will cause us to lay hold on those marvelous blessings. (2) *There was the motive which inspired him.* Moses was not prompted by selfishness in reaching his decision, but rather by a desire to do his duty, even though that duty would involve him in many hardships. (2 Tim. 2: 3.)

In considering the case of Moses more in particular, we note (1) that he had a clear eye for distinguishing right from wrong. He did not let the fact that he was Pharaoh's daughter's son, and therefore an heir to the throne, or the example of Joseph's remaining in Egypt and serving his people as their ruler, influence him in reaching his decision; God was calling *him*, and his own

duty therefore had to be considered apart from that of anyone else. (2) he knew that the pleasures of sin were only temporary. (1 John 2: 15-17; James 4: 4.) (3) He had a clear eye for the things of real value—Egypt *versus* Christ. (Heb. 5: 14.) (4) He looked away to the coming reward. (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)

The words of the section of the lesson text now under consideration reveal the secret of the great success which Moses was able to achieve; and no one can read them without realizing something of the goal which he was able to see in the distance. His sacrifices were great, and his trials were many; but he counted them as nothing that he might see him who is the Invisible. (Phil. 3: 7-11.) When the face of Moses shone (Ex. 34: 29-35), it was not the result of his looking upon silver, gold, and the precious things of this life; but because he had looked up at God. And as one stands by Moses in Egypt, he might think that his choice was foolish and absurd; but when he stands by the glorified Moses on the mount of transfiguration, he knows that the choice which he made was the only wise one he could have made.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

In what way is the record of the life of Moses divided?

What does the Bible reveal regarding his work and character?

Why was Moses permitted to live so close to God?

What responsibility does one have with reference to his own work and character?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?

What are some of the things which we learn from the early life and care of Moses?

Discuss the subject of God's providence as it is seen in the case of Moses.

The Appearance of the Burning Bush

Tell how Moses came to be in the wilderness of Horeb at the time of this lesson.

What mistake had he made forty years before and what followed it?

Who was "the angel of Jehovah"? Give reasons for your answer.

What lesson should we learn from the appearance of the burning bush?

God's Message to Moses

What was the "wonder" involved in the burning bush that attracted Moses' attention?

What lesson is there in this for us?

What was the first lesson which Moses learned at the burning bush?

How can more reverence for God's Word be created today?

What usually happens when people do manifest the proper regard for God and the Bible?

What did Moses learn when he reverently listened to that which Jehovah said to him?

What always precedes the divine effort to free people from their bondage?

How do we know that God is concerned for his people who are in bondage to sin?

What effect should this have on those who have been freed from the power of the evil one?

"From Faith unto Faith"

Where do we learn the principal facts about Moses for this lesson?

In what way is the statement in Hebrews related to the historical facts?

Why did the parents of Moses make an effort to save their child, in spite of the king?

Why was Moses called the "son of Pharaoh's daughter" and what did that imply?
 What do we know regarding the cruel bondage to which God's people were subjected in Egypt?
 What reason do we have for thinking that Moses would have been a pharaoh had he remained the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

What was the basic reason for his momentous decision?
 What is the true meaning of the faith which is acceptable to God?
 What are the two elements in every decision and how did they operate in the case of Moses?
 What did his faith do for him?
 How do we know that Moses actually did make the proper decision?

Lesson VIII—May 26, 1968

DEBORAH, A MOTHER IN ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Judges 4: 4-10; 5: 6, 7, 12, 15

4 Now Deb'-o-rah, a prophetess, the wife of Lap'-pi-doth, she judged Is'-ra-el at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deb'-o-rah between Ra-mah and Beth'-el in the hill-country of E'-phra-im: and the children of Is'-ra-el came up to her for judgment.

6 And she sent and called Ba'-rak the son of A-bin'-o-am out of Ke'-desh-naph'-ta-li, and said unto him, Hath not Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, commanded, *saying*, Go and draw unto mount Ta'-bor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naph'-ta-li and of the children of Zeb'-u-lun?

7 And I will draw unto thee, to the river Ki-shon, Sis'-e-ra, the captain of Ja'-bin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand.

8 And Ba'-rak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for Je-ho'-vah will sell Sis'-e-ra into the hand of a woman. And Deb'-o-rah arose, and went with Ba'-rak to Ke'desh.

10 And Ba'-rak called Zeb'-u-lun and Naph'-ta-li together to Ke'-desh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet; and Deb'-o-rah went up with him.

6 In the days of Sham'-gar the son of A'-nath,
 In the days of Ja'-el, the high-ways were unoccupied,
 And the travellers walked through byways.

7 The rulers ceased in Is'-ra-el, they ceased,
 Until that I Deb'-o-rah arose,
 That I arose a mother in Is'-ra-el.

12 Awake, awake, Deb'-o-rah;
 Awake, awake, utter a song:
 Arise, Ba'-rak, and lead away thy captives, thou son of A-bin'-o-am.

15 And the princes of Is'-sa-char were with Deb'-o-rah;
 As was Is'-sa-char, so was Ba'-rak;
 Into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.
 By the watercourses of Reu'-ben
 There were great resolves of heart.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."*(Judges 5: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Judges 5: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

May 20. M.....	Conditions in Israel (Judg. 4: 1-3)
May 21. T.....	Deborah, Judge and Prophetess (Judg. 4: 1-5)
May 22. W.....	Deborah Commands Barak (Judg. 4: 6-10)
May 23. T.....	Barak's Successful Effort (Judg. 4: 12-16)
May 24. F.....	Deborah's Prophecy Fulfilled (Judg. 4: 17-22)
May 25. S.....	Song of Deborah (Judg. 5: 1-5)
May 26. S.....	Deborah, a Mother in Israel (Judg. 5: 6-11)

TIME.—1285 B.C.

PLACES.—Between Ramah and Bethel, mount Tabor, and the river Kishon.

PERSONS.—Deborah, Barak, Sisera, and the two armies.

Introduction

The historical setting for the Old Testament portion of the lessons of this quarter, so far, has been in Genesis, with one lesson in Exodus. We now pass to the Book of Judges for three lessons, and then to three other Old Testament books for the remaining three lessons in the quarter. There are, unfortunately, people in the church today who do not see any need for studying the Old Testament, and especially such parts as we are about to consider in the lesson now before us and the others to follow. But if one will only enter into the spirit of the historian who wrote these accounts, he will find that the periods which are covered in these records are of special interest. It is true that other portions of the Bible may be more profitable for "teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness"; but for merely human interest—for the lively touches of ancient manners, for the succession of romantic incidents, for the consciousness that we are living face to face with the people of those periods, and for the tragical pathos of events and characters—there is nothing like the history which is recorded in the books already referred to, beginning with Judges.

We should always remember that these historical books of the Old Testament are a part of the Divine Record, and it would seem, as some one has suggested, that they were left in the Sacred Collection, so that we may be able to see the various elements which had so much to do with the history of God's people, such as the human, both individual and national, and even barbarian—things which we often

want to ignore. But as it is, the Books of Judges, Ruth, First Kings, and Esther, call our attention from the ideal, which we are wont to imagine regarding those ancient days, and make it possible for us to see that which actually happened. If it was the responsibility of the historian, under divine supervision, to make a faithful record of those characters and events of those days, then it is no less our duty, as well as our privilege, to study them. (Rom. 15: 4.)

It may surprise some to learn that there was a woman judge in Israel, who apparently had the approval of Jehovah; and this is another reason why we should make a careful study of the entire Bible, and discover for ourselves just what the facts are. If this is done, we doubtless will come face to face with many more surprises; but we shall also learn the truth regarding many of them. We are not told just why Deborah came to be recognized as a judge; but we do have a record of what she did. No one therefore should offer any apology for her action in judging Israel, and in taking a leading part in the liberation of her people from their enemies. The context plainly implies that she acted under Jehovah's authority and with his approval. Deborah endeavored to get Barak to take the lead; and even after his refusal to do so, she never went beyond "womanly modesty" in seeking to direct the affairs which were thrust upon her. The success of her endeavors are summed up in a single sentence, following her song of victory, namely, "And the land had rest forty years."

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Deborah the Judge and the Call to Arms

(Judges 4: 4-10)

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel

at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill-country of Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded, saying, Go and draw unto mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for Jehovah will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh; and there went up ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

The Hebrew meaning of the name "Deborah" is a *bee*; and Bible readers will remember that the nurse of Isaac's wife Rebekah was also named Deborah. (Gen. 35: 8.) The Deborah of our lesson was a prophetess, who apparently enjoyed the favor of Jehovah. A "prophet," literally speaking, is one who speaks for another (Ex. 4: 10-16, 7: 1f), and that means, of course, that a prophet of Jehovah was one who spoke for him. Those who spoke for God during Bible times uttered "present truth," and also foretold future events. They may be spoken of as the preachers of their day, as may be seen by reading the records of their work. A "prophetess," such as Deborah, was a woman through whom God made known his will to the people. There are several such women mentioned in the Bible, and of the number the most prominent are Miriam (Ex. 15: 20); Huldah (2 Kings 22: 14); Anna (Luke 2: 36); and the four virgin daughters of Philip (Acts 21: 8, 9).

Hebrew scholars tell us that Deborah's relationship to Lappidoth, insofar as the meaning of the original is concerned, can be rendered either "the wife of Lappidoth," as in the text now before us, or "a woman of Lappidoth;" but it appears that the general view of commentators is

that she was the wife of a man by that name. The Hebrew meaning of "Lappidoth" is *torches* or *lightning flashes*; and there is no other mention of him in the Bible. In saying that Deborah judged Israel "at that time," the historian meant that she judged the people of the Lord during the oppression of Jabin the king of Canaan. (Judges 4: 1-3.) This is the first instance we have in the Bible in which a woman was the head of a government, or who directed the civil and religious affairs of the people. That situation was probably due to the fact that the moral condition of the nation of Israel had deteriorated to the point that no man was fitted or willing to discharge the duties which were required in judging the people.

In saying that Deborah "dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah," it is, of course, possible that she had a house under a palm-tree; but in keeping with the idea suggested by the marginal reading, *sat*, it is more probable that she had her judgment chair or couch, from which she gave her decisions, under the palm-tree on her premises; and it is further possible that the tree got its name from this association. Jamieson notes that it is still common in the east to administer justice in the open air, under the canopy of a tree.

The writer of the Book of Judges informs us as to the general area in which the judgment-seat of Deborah was located, namely, "between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill-country of Ephraim." This was in the mountainous section of south Ephraim which, in New Testament times, was a part of Samaria, in the central part of Palestine. (See map.) Deborah apparently did not make a circuit, as Samuel did (1 Sam. 7: 15-17); but conducted her work beneath her own palm-tree. The people came to her for decisions respecting disputes (2 Sam. 15: 1-6) and settlements regarding difficulties. Josephus says that the children of Israel requested Deborah to pray to Jehovah that they might be delivered out of the hand of Jabin. (1 Sam. 7: 5-11.)

The language of the communique which Deborah delivered to Barak was couched in the thought-pattern of that day; and it was very emphatic. We have no previous

knowledge of Barak, and we do not therefore know whether or not he was skilled in the art of carnal warfare; but the very fact that Deborah was instructed by Jehovah to call him, is sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that he was capable of leading such an expedition against the Canaanites. Kedesh-naphtali was apparently the home of Barak; and it was so called to distinguish it from other places which were also named Kedesh. The "Kedesh" now under consideration was one of the cities of refuge, as well as one of the cities which were given to the Levites. (Josh. 20: 1-7; 21: 32.)

"Tabor" was a mountain on the northeast corner of the plain of Esdraelon; and it was not only a convenient, but an ideal, place for Barak to assemble his army, ten thousand in number, from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali which were located in the area of the danger zone. (See map.) When Sisera learned of that which Barak had done (see verses 12, 13), he drew up his forces on the river Kishon, in the valley below. The army of Sisera was much larger than that of Barak, but Jehovah had promised to be with the latter, and deliver the host of Jabin into his hands. God has always promised to be with his people, when they carry out his commandments; and it matters not how weak they may appear to those who oppose them, the final victory will be theirs.

One of the great lessons which the Lord's people today should learn, and learn well, is to trust in the promises which he has made to them. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples, as recorded by Matthew (28: 19, 20), he promised to be with them throughout the entire Christian dispensation. "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This implies that the Lord will bless every effort which his disciples make in his service, if they act in accordance with his will; and it is certain that no one can please him who does not have confidence in that which he has promised. The writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he

is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.)

To *believe that God is* to be convinced or convicted that he does exist; while to *believe that he rewards them that seek after him* is to have confidence in that which he says. The writer begins the chapter from which the quotation just given is taken with these words: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11: 1.) The passage just quoted is rendered by Edward Robinson, in his *Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, in these words: "Faith is confidence as to things hoped for; conviction as to things not seen." When the child of God is convinced that it is his Father who has made a promise to him, then he must have confidence that the promise will be fulfilled in keeping with the conditions which characterize it, if indeed there are any conditions connected with it.

When one first reads the reply which Barak gave in response to the message which Deborah delivered to him, he might get the idea that Barak was afraid to go into the battle alone; but when all the facts are considered, it will be seen that there is probably more involved in his statement, then a superficial reading of it reveals. Jamieson says that it was customary for Orientals to take with them into battle that which they valued highly; and when we read 1 Samuel 4: 1-9, it is not difficult to understand why they felt as they did about such matters. It would be but natural for soldiers to receive great inspiration from seeing such a person as Deborah in their midst.

Adam Clarke, on the other hand, quotes an addition to Barak's statement which we have in the text now before us, found in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and which, if there is any basis in fact for it, also throws light on the attitude of Barak toward his leading the troops into battle against the Canaanites. After saying that which our text contains, the Septuagint (the Greek Version of the Old Testament) adds, "because I know not the day in which the Lord will send his angel to give me success," by which he evidently meant that he needed Deborah the prophetess

to tell him when to make the attack. If this was his reason for answering Deborah as he did, then it is not correct to say that he was either afraid to go into battle alone, or that he lacked confidence in the promise of God for victory. Instead, he simply wanted to be sure that he did the right thing at the right time.

But whatever may have been the reason for Barak's wanting Deborah to go with him to the battle, there was no hesitation on her part; but there is ample ground, based on Deborah's reply to him, for the conclusion that he did not meet with that which was expected of him. If Barak had done as Deborah implied that he should, then the honor of the victory would have been his; but as it turned out, Sisera was sold into the hand of a woman. The text, however, is not entirely clear as to whether the "woman" in question was Deborah or Jael. They both had prominent parts in the final victory, and the honor which went to either of them eclipsed that which went to Barak. (Verses 17-22.)

Many people with motives which were good, in and of themselves, have failed to please God, and thereby missed the great blessings which could have been theirs, all because they did not put their undivided trust in him. The promise which God made to them was indeed appealing, but they did not think that it could be theirs, unless they in some way contributed to its fulfillment. People must, of course, do their part, if God makes it plain that he expects that of them; but there are times when those to whom the promises are made must go forward in the discharge of their duty, by doing exactly that which is required of them; even though they cannot see just how the details will be worked out. Abraham and Sarah felt that they should help God fulfil his promise of giving them a son; but they were not only wrong about that; they were also responsible for much misery which had to be, and still is being, suffered by them and their descendants. (Gen. 16: 1-16.) There never has been, and there never will be, peace between the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and through Ishmael. (Read again verses 11, 12, and compare the ten-

sion and conflict between Israeli and the Arab states. The Arabs are the modern descendants of Abraham through Ishmael.)

The Calamitous Condition Which Brought on the Trouble

(Judges 5: 6, 7)

In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath,

In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied,

And the travellers walked through byways.

The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,

Until that I Deborah arose,

That I arose a mother in Israel.

The reference which was made by Deborah was probably to that period between the judgeship of Shamgar, who saved Israel by smiting six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox-goad, and her own period of service. The only recorded history of the time between these two judges is found in Judges 4: 1-3, which reads as follows: "And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, when Ehud was dead. And Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years; he mightily oppressed the children of Israel."

It is fair to assume from the reference to Ehud, the judge who immediately preceded Shamgar, that tenure of the latter's judgeship was very brief, embracing, perhaps, only the time which was required for his slaughter of the Philistines, and the consequent deliverance of the Israelites from their domination. The only references to Shamgar in the Bible are those in the text now under consideration and in Judges 3: 31. But regardless of how long Shamgar served as a judge or saviour of Israel, it is easy to conclude from the text now before us that Israel was not long in returning to idolatry, with the result of a general state of anarchy. Josephus says that the people of the Lord took no warning, from their former misfor-

tunes, to amend their manners; and, neither worshipping God nor submitting to his laws, they were brought into the slavery of Jabin.

That which has just been described were the conditions which followed the people's choices of "new" gods which they adopted and worshipped. Judges 5: 8 says,

They chose new gods;

Then was war in the gates:

Was there a shield or spear seen

Among forty thousand in Israel?

It was in such a situation that Deborah became the fourth judge of Israel. There is no indication that she was endeavoring to gratify any personal ambition; her sole aim, or so it appears, was to help her people, over whom she watched with the lively interest and solicitude of a mother over her children. Deborah not only had the wisdom and the ability to judge her people; she also had the courage to lead them into battle.

The Song of Victory

(Judges 5: 12, 15)

Awake, awake, Deborah;

Awake, awake, utter a song:

*Arise, Barak, and lead away thy
captives, thou son of Abinoam.*

*And the princes of Issachar were
with Deborah;*

*As was Issachar, so was Barak;
Into the valley they rushed forth
at his feet.*

*By the watercourses of Reuben
There were great resolves of
heart.*

The last two sections of the lesson text are taken from the song of Deborah, which she evidently composed. It has been called the song of victory, and it reminds one of the song of Moses which he and the children of Israel sang, following their crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians who attempted to overtake them.

(Ex. 15: 1-21.) Deborah's poem was expressed in what has been called the purest Hebrew known; and some scholars think that, for beauty of expression, fervor, and the flow of poetic thought, it has not been surpassed by any later writer.

Deborah's description of the battle against the Canaanites, and the ensuing victory, is found in Judges 5: 19-22. Josephus says that when the two armies came close together, and the battle began, that a tremendous rain and hail storm descended upon the battlefield, accompanied by a wind which blew the rain into the faces of the Canaanites, "and so darkened their eyes, their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them, nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords; while the storm did not so much as inconvenience the Israelites, because it came in their backs. They also took courage, upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, so that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies, and slew a great number of them; so that some of them fell by the Israelites, some fell by their own horses, which were put into disorder, and not a few were killed by their own chariots." (Ant., p. 158.) We also gather from Deborah's account that the river rose to a furious flood, and engulfed many of the opposing army in its clashing torrents.

The whole theme of the song of Deborah is one of alertness, of eager response to the challenge of the situation in which the people of the Lord found themselves, and to the call of Jehovah. The verses fairly tingle with power, which the Israelites felt and appropriated. In a similar manner, the need for alertness is present today. No one knows when the great opportunities and responsibilities of life may come upon him; and the Lord's people therefore should keep themselves in a state of readiness.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What portions of the Bible have we studied so far in this quarter?

What is the value of considering people.

truths, and events of the Old Testament?

What is the best reason you can think of for studying the Old Testament records?

What was your reaction when you first learned that Deborah was a judge of God's people?

What can you say of the success of her work in that capacity?

Deborah the Judge and the Call to Arms

What is the meaning of the name "Deborah"?

What other Bible character had the same name?

What is the basic meaning of the term "prophet"?

What was "prophetess"?

Who were some of the other prophetesses of Bible times?

In what way was Deborah related to Lapidoth?

How did she come to be a judge of Israel?

Where, apparently, did Deborah administer justice in the course of her judgeship?

Where did she live?

What were probably some of her duties as the judge of the people?

What message did she deliver to Barak and how did he react to it?

What lesson should we learn from this?

How alone can people today be pleasing to God?

What is the true meaning of faith and what are its two elements?

How can the Lord's people show their confidence in him?

When Barak attached a condition to his leading the army, what did Deborah tell him?

What does it mean for one to put his undivided trust in the Lord?

The Calamitous Condition Which Brought on the Trouble

What was the general condition of the people of the Lord when Deborah became judge?

Who was Shamgar and for what is he noted?

Who was Ehud and what notable thing did he do?

What effect did their former suffering have on the people of Israel?

How did Deborah regard her judgeship?

The Song of Victory

What is the setting of the last two sections of the lesson text for today?

How do students of the Hebrew Bible regard Deborah's song?

Why was the poem written and set to music?

In what way did Deborah describe the battle and the ensuing victory?

What is the principal theme of the song of Deborah?

What effect did it evidently have on her and those who sang it with her?

What reason can you offer for people's being alert today, especially God's people?

Lesson IX—June 2, 1968

GIDEON, OF GREAT COURAGE

Lesson Text

Judges 6: 11-18; 7: 15-21

11 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah came, and sat under the oak which was in Oph'-rah, that pertained unto Jo'-ash the A'-bi-ez'-rite: and his son Gld'-e-on was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Mid'-i-an-ites.

12 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah appeared unto him, and said unto him, Je-ho'-vah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

13 And Gid'-e-on said unto him, Oh, my lord, if Je-ho'-vah is with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where are all his wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Je-ho'-vah bring us up from E'-gypt? but now Je-ho'-vah hath cast us off, and delivered us into the hand of Mid'-i-an.

14 And Je-ho'-vah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Is'-ra-el from the hand of Mid'-i-an: have not I sent thee?

15 And he said unto him, Oh, Lord, wherewith shall I save Is'-ra-el? behold, my family is the poorest in Ma-nas'-seh, and I am the least in my father's house.

16 And Je-ho'-vah said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Mid'-i-an-ites as one man.

17 And he said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, then show me a sign that it is thou that talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and lay it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

15 And it was so, when Gid'-e-on heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Is'-ra-el, and said, Arise; for Je-ho'-vah hath delivered into your hand the host of Mid'-i-an.

16 And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outermost part

of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For Je-ho'-vah and for Gid'-e-on.

19 So Gid'-e-on. and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets,

and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow; and they cried. The sword of Je-ho'-vah and of Gid'-e-on.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put *them* to flight.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."* (Judges 6: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Judges 6: 36-40.

Daily Bible Readings

May 27. M.....	Oppression of Israel (Judg. 6: 1-10)
May 28. T.....	An Angel Visits Gideon (Judg. 6: 11-18)
May 29. W.....	Gideon's Faithfulness (Judg. 6: 25-32)
May 30. T.....	Assurance to Gideon (Judg. 6: 33-40)
May 31. F.....	Gideon's Victory (Judg. 7: 19-23)
June 1. S.....	Gideon, a Judge (Judg. 8: 22-28)
June 2. S.....	Death of Gideon (Judg. 8: 33-35)

TIME.—1245 B.C.

PLACES.—Ophrah, in Manasseh, and the plain of Jezreel.

PERSONS.—The angel of Jehovah, Gideon, his army, and the Midianites.

Introduction

Those who read and study the Book of Judges are impressed with the manner in which Jehovah dealt with his people, and especially the way in which he delivered them from their enemies. Sometimes this was accomplished by one man, by a relatively few soldiers, or by a fairly good size army; but never with a force which equalled the strength of the enemy. The deliverance of the people from them who oppressed them was not always the end in view; they were taught to put their trust in their Deliverer.

The background of our lesson for today is the same old story of Israel's rebellion against Jehovah, and the great distress which came to them as a result of their transgression. It is fair to assume from the last verse of chapter 5 and the first verse of chapter 6 that the people of Jehovah enjoyed his blessings during the forty years following their deliverance from Jabin and Sisera by Deborah and Barak. It seems that the Israelites lived in God's favor as long as they had a faithful leader; but when they were left without one, they were soon brought

under the influence of the gods of the land.

When the average person today reads these historical accounts of the waywardness of the children of Israel he thinks that they should have done better. God had manifested himself to them in so many ways, and continued to remind them of his superior power over the gods of the land; but still Israel forsook Jehovah for the idols of their day. But if we will only stop and look around, it will not take us long to see that in many instances we do not do any better. God is just as real today as he was in the days of the judges, and his promises to bless his people are just as strong. But still we go astray, and especially when our leaders fail. Why is this true? The answer is that human nature is practically always the same, and the only way we can overcome it is to become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.)

The analogy which we have just been considering should cause every one who professes to follow the Lord to realize the great value of

continuous Bible study, and the importance of faithful teachers of the will of God. People today, no less than the Israelites of old, are usually more constant in their service to the Lord, while under the influence of godly leaders; but let the leaders pass on or become careless, and the people will likely drift into carelessness and neglect of their duty. This should be an impressive lesson to elders especially. But their responsibility does not lessen in the least the obligation of all of us in this respect. (Heb. 10: 24, 25.)

It is difficult to understand how the people of Israel could see a vic-

tory like the one before us today, and then ever turn away from God who saved them; but that is exactly what they did. "And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and played the harlot after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not Jehovah their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel." (Judges 8: 33-35.)

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is found in the main text, and will therefore be treated in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Call of Gideon and His Hesitation

(Judges 6: 11-18)

And the angel of Jehovah came, and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

The location of Gideon's home was apparently in that portion of Manasseh's inheritance which was west of the Jordan. (Josh. 17: 2.) It seems to have been some fifteen or sixteen miles north of Jericho. The father of Gideon was living there, but it was to the son, rather than to the father, that the angel appeared. Joash was a worshipper of Baal, as may be seen by reading verses 25ff.

The low depths of misery to which the people of Israel had been reduced is revealed in this section of our lesson. If Gideon was able to save a little wheat from the enemy, it was necessary that he hide it in the winepress and thresh it. The lack of vintage among the Israelites had rendered their winepresses useless, so far as their normal purpose was concerned; and because of that the Midianites would not suspect that they were being used for threshing grain.

And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him, and said unto him, Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

We have no previous knowledge of Gideon, but it is sufficient to know that God knew both his life and his character. When a person does his duty, however small, under difficult circumstances, God always takes note of it; and will reward him accordingly. (Prov. 22: 29; Matt. 25: 21.) This is the kind of man whom God can use in his service; and it is the kind of man whom he chooses.

And Gideon said unto him, Oh, my lord, if Jehovah is with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where are all his wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? and now Jehovah hath cast us off, and delivered us into the hand of Midian.

(Read verses 1-10.) After the period of rest following the victory of Deborah and Barak, Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and he sold them into the hand of the Midianites; and they afflicted them seven years. This affliction was so severe that the children of Israel were compelled to leave their homes, and make them dens in the mountains and caves of the earth. If they sowed their land, the Midianites, along with the Amalekites, and the children of the east, came and destroyed their crops, and drove away their sheep, oxen, and asses. "And Israel was brought very low because of Midian; and

the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah."

But Gideon was like all other people in this respect: if God is with us, then why all this evil? We seldom stop to consider the fact that such conditions are the result of sin. Hence we read, "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah because of Midian, that Jehovah sent a prophet unto the children of Israel; and he said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am Jehovah your God; ye shall not fear the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But ye have not hearkened unto my voice." (Verses 7-10.)

Jehovah had promised to hear his recreant children when they repented and cried unto him (Deut. 30: 1-3), but they must be made to understand their sinful condition, and their utter helplessness apart from the Lord. Accordingly, a prophet was sent among them to show them why they were suffering such great agony. This is a lesson which we all need to learn. Faithful teachers of God's word do not delight in pointing people's sins out to them; they are simply trying to get them to see their true condition and turn away from it, so that God can bless them. (Ezek. 33: 10, 11.)

And Jehovah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?

The angel of Jehovah did not reply to Gideon's objections, but looked upon him approvingly, and told him to go in the strength which God's presence had given him.

And he said unto him, Oh, Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And Jehovah said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, then show me a sign that it is thou that talkest with me. Depart

not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and lay it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

The use of the capital letter in "Lord" in this place (verse 13) indicates that Gideon came to recognize the angel as the messenger of Jehovah. (Heb. 13: 2). The magnitude of the work which he was called upon to do made Gideon feel his own weakness, but Jehovah quickly assured him that he would be able to smite the enemy, as if they were but one man.

It has always been true with *humble* men that when they have been charged with a great task they feel that someone else can do it better and the idea that they are to play an important part in some great enterprise leaves them with the feeling of inadequacy. Gideon realized how insignificant his background was—his clan and his tribe being unimportant alongside the others and he felt that he, himself, was the least in his father's family.

Moses, when he was called to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, cried out: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3: 11.) Moses was modest and confused. God had to instruct Moses and transform his modesty into the humility of faith. God needed the help and co-operation of men to carry out his ends; he knew the heart of man, so he could choose the right man as his servant and minister as he does now. Isaiah in the temple was mindful of the fact that "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." (Isa. 6: 5.) Yet there came a time in the life of each of these men when the divine will become greater than the human, and they replied in glad and humble obedience, "Here am I; send me." (Isa. 6: 8.)

Gideon wanted the assurance of divine support "And he said unto him, If now I have found favor in thy sight, then show me a sign that it is thou that talkest with me." It was not a wish of disbelief but rather one of caution. He would do anything that God wanted him to do, but he did not want to act on his own initiative. He wanted to be

sure the Lord was with him in each thing that he did. It was not cowardice, but rather discretion not to attempt anything as serious as this without the Lord. His sign was granted. When he laid his prepared kid and cakes upon the rock, the angel of the Lord put forth his staff and touched it and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed it. Gideon no longer hesitated, but rejoiced in the visit of the angel, built an altar and worshipped the Lord. It was this assurance of God's support that convinced Gideon that he must do his task.

The Interpreter's Bible very forcefully emphasizes the point that God is with people when they are asked to do his will: "Does God's spirit mean anything in life? Can we prove that there is power from him which can touch our world and give more than man alone can supply? It has been proved again and again in history by what individuals and groups have been able to do when they have believed in him and known him to be near. A mighty plus is added to life when God is with us. "Open his eyes, that he may see," prayed Elisha, and when his eyes were opened, the young man, Elisha's servant, saw that "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire." (2 Kings 6: 17.) Here is power as real as atomic energy or the torrents of the Norris Dam. Indeed, it is stronger than these mighty aspects of nature, since it is the power of God. All men are bidden, as in the letter to the Ephesians to "be strong in the Lord." (Eph. 6: 10.)

Unusual Encouragement and the Plan of Attack

(Judges 7: 15-18)

And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and, the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped; and he returned into the camp of Israel, and said, Arise: for Jehovah hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

When Gideon went out to fight his first battle at Jezreel against the Midianites, God told him that "the people that are with thee are too many." God knew that with such an army of thirty-two thousand the Israelites would pride themselves on

their own strength and claim as their own the victory which he had promised to them. Two methods were used to reduce the number.

(1) All the faint-hearted were told that they could quit the field. Twenty-two thousand left for their homes and their businesses, leaving ten thousand. There had to be a further reduction for God said, "the people are yet too many." The second method was put into use. Gideon led his army down to the streams of water and told them to drink. God told him, "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink . . . And Jehovah said unto Gideon, by the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thy hand; and let every man go unto his own place." (Judges 7: 5, 7)

After the test at the water had been made, the sacred historian says, "So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man unto his tent, but retained the three hundred men: and the camp of Midian was beneath him in the valley." (Verse 8.) Gideon, of course, could not see how his three hundred men could successfully overcome the numberless host of the enemy, but he believed that Jehovah would somehow give him the victory. And so Jehovah, knowing just how to encourage him, commanded him to take his servant and go by night to the camp of the enemy, and listen to what would be said. He heard one of the men telling a dream, and then listened while a fellow soldier gave its interpretation, both of which may have been inspired by Jehovah. His first reaction was to worship, and he then returned to his own company and assured them that the victory was theirs. It is well to note the present "hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." This, however, does not mean that they would not have to fulfill the conditions imposed upon them. (Read verses 9-14.)

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of all of them

trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches within the pitchers. And he raid unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the uttermost part of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, For Jehovah and for Gideon.

By dividing the men into three companies, Gideon would lead the Midianites to think that they were surrounded by a large army, while the empty pitchers would conceal the torches. It appears that the trumpets, pitchers, and torches made up the entire equipment of the three hundred men with Gideon. They may have had swords at their sides, but they were not used in this attack. The only sword which they wielded at this point was "the sword of Jehovah and of Gideon."

When we think of the omnipotence of Jehovah, we may wonder why the name of Gideon should be added to that of Jehovah. The answer seems to lie in the fact that great and abstract ideas do not have their full influence over the mind of men until they are embodied in some concrete form. This is one of the reasons for the Incarnation of God in man—the man Christ Jesus. But in the case now before us, it was true that both the arm of Jehovah and of Gideon were over the Midianites; and we have suggested to us therefore the union of the divine and the human in the work which is done in the world.

The Enemy Confused and Routed

(Judges 7: 19-21)

So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outermost part of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch, when they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands wherewith to blow: and they cried, The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon.

The secret of success in any campaign against evil is cooperation. That was true in the case of Gideon and the three hundred, and it is true now. This is a lesson which the church needs to have impressed upon it. The middle watch, was the middle part of the night, and the beginning of it may have been near midnight. The "newly set watch" suggests more or less confusion, due to the fact that the soldiers who had just come on duty had not settled down to keeping strict guard.

This battle was not fought and won by magic, but, as already indicated, by the intelligent cooperation of human and divine forces, resulting in the triumph of right over wrong. Gideon did not attack the bodies of the great army before him, but rather their minds. After carefully investigating the state of their thinking, at the direction of Jehovah, he himself thought and acted quickly, closely, and decisively. Some wise observer has noted that our belief in God's support too often causes us to forget that he makes a demand on our ingenuity. We, too, in the service of Jehovah, are required to exercise foresight, formulate plans, and execute them with the utmost of our skill, in the spiritual warfare. Only rarely are we to stand still and see him work for us. There is, by his choice, in our religious work the interaction of the Divine and the human; but it is tragically true that we are usually illbalanced—either failing to believe or forgetting to plan, rarely doing both.

And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran; and they shouted, and put them to flight.

The mighty armies of the Midianites were thrown into utter confusion; and thinking that they were in the hands of their enemies, they began to fight each other. Those who survived started toward the fords of the Jordan. But Gideon called on the men of Ephraim to block their escape, which they did. The victory was complete. (Compare Isaiah 10: 26 and read all of Judges 8.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What impression do the readers of the Book of Judges get with reference to God and his people?

What was always true with regard to the deliverance of his people from their enemies?

What is the general background for today's lesson?

Why did the people of the Lord lapse into sin so easily and quickly?

What lesson do followers of Christ have in their example for themselves?

Why have people in all ages of the world failed to follow the Lord so often?

How alone can people overcome human nature?

What lesson should we get here with reference to continuous Bible study?

What great responsibility of church leaders is suggested in this lesson?

If leaders themselves fail to be faithful, how does that affect the responsibility of the average member of the church? Give reason for¹ your answer.

Why do the people of the Lord so easily forget a great blessing which comes from him?

The Call of Gideon and His Hesitation

Who was Gideon and where did he live?

Why were the people of his day in such desperate straits?

What is suggested regarding Gideon by the angel's appearance to him?

What kind of treatment did the people of Israel receive from the Midianites?

What was Gideon's reaction to the angel's appearance to him?

What did Jehovah do when the people cried unto him because of their distress?

What was the purpose in sending a prophet unto them?

Why must people understand and acknowledge their sinful condition before God can forgive them?

Instead of answering his objections, what did Jehovah say to him?

What is suggested with reference to Gideon's attitude toward the angel who spoke to him?

How did Gideon feel regarding his fitness for the work which was planned for him?

What lesson do we learn from this? Name some other people who manifested a similar attitude to that of Gideon?

In what way did Gideon ask for the assurance of divine favor?

What sign was granted to him?

What may people who are called on to serve the Lord always depend on?

How may people become strong in the Lord? Think, and discuss freely.

Unusual Encouragement and the Plan of Attack

What did God tell him regarding the size of his army?

In what way was the size of the army reduced?

Why did God want Gideon to have a small army?

What special encouragement did Gideon receive before he went into battle?

What was the plan of attack?

The Enemy Confused and Routed

What is the secret of success in any campaign against evil?

Why are so many of the Lord's people today so slow in learning this lesson?

What did Gideon attack when he and his three hundred went against the Midianites?

Why was the enemy so badly confused and defeated?

Lesson X—June 9, 1968

SAMSON, OF GREAT STRENGTH

Lesson Text

Judges 13: 2-7; 16: 28-31

2 And there was a certain man of Zo'-rah, of the family of the Dan'-ites, whose name was Ma-no'-ah; and his wife was barren, and bare not.

3 And the angel of Je-ho'-vah appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.

4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing:

5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Naz'-i-rite unto God from the

womb: and he shall begin to save Is'-ra-el out of the hand of the Phi-lis'-tines.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible; and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

7 But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing; for the child shall be a Naz'-i-rite

unto God from the womb to the day of his death.

28 And Samson called unto Je-ho'-vah, and said, O Lord Je-ho'-vah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Phi-lis'-tines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Phi-lis'-tines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life.

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zó'-rah and Esh'-ta-ol in the burying-place of Ma-no'-ah his father. And he judged Is'-ra-el twenty years.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men."* (Judges 15: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Judges 15: 2-20.

Daily Bible Readings

June 3. M.....	Samson's Parents (Judg. 13: 2-14)
June 4. T.....	The Nazirite Vow (Num. 6: 1-21)
June 5. W.....	Samson's Strength (Judg. 14: 5, 6)
June 6. T.....	Samson's Weakness (Judg. 16: 15-17)
June 7. F.....	Samson and Delilah (Judg. 16: 18-22)
June 8. S.....	Samson Mocked (Judg. 16: 23-27)
June 9. S.....	Death of Samson (Judg. 16: 28-31)

TIME.—1161-1120 B.C.

PLACES.—Zorah, in the southern part of Dan, and Gaza.

Persons.—The angel of Jehovah, Manoah, his wife, Samson, and the

Philistines.

Introduction

The story of Samson is one of the most singular and interesting narratives to be found in all of the Old Testament. He was one of the lines of judges, used by Jehovah for the deliverance of his people from their enemies; and his role in that capacity illustrates the power of God to deliver his people from their oppressors, without the aid of large armies and powerful military equipment. Wherever the inspired record contains the details of the conflict with the oppressing powers, it will be seen that the other judges were aided by their brethren; but Samson always fought alone. In fact, instead of his brethren helping him, they endeavored to deliver Samson to the enemy.

When one reads the Book of Judges, he will see that Samson was the last of the judges whose records are found in that part of the Bible. The accounts of the last two of the judges—Eli and Samuel—are in the first part of First Samuel. But wherever we read about the work of

the judges, the need for them is always the same; and so, as we are introduced to Samson, we read, "And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah; and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years." (Judges 13: 1.)

Notwithstanding the plainness of the record regarding the origin of Samson, many Bible students do not hesitate to say that the writer of the narrative now before us drew on popular oral folk tales for his story of Samson's life; but people who believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God will not only hold fast to that which it says, but will also teach others to do the same. But in estimating the careers of men like Samson, we are apt to be influenced by scruples which should have no place in our thinking. No one today has the right to judge Samson by the standard of the New Testament. He lived at a time when the people were to a large extent alienated from God, and he did many things

which are contrary to the way of strict piety. However, he was used of God to accomplish his purpose,

and is reckoned among the heroes of faith, as may be seen by reading Hebrews 11: 32ff.

The Golden Text

"With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men." The story of Samson and his dealings with the Philistines never grows old to Bible readers. His first active opposition to them was the outgrowth of a love affair with one of their daughters. While visiting in the town of Timnah, he saw a Philistine woman there whom he decided to marry; and when he returned to his home, he practically ordered his parents to go and get her for him. They were, as one might expect, greatly disturbed, but all attempts to reason with him were in vain. Samson simply replied, "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." The parents did not understand that Jehovah was directing all of this; for he wanted an occasion against the Philistines.

The story of the visit of Samson and his parents to the young woman and her family, the events which led to the marriage of Samson to the Philistine woman, along with his riddle which led to his killing thirty men, in order to get their garments to give to those who had "guessed" his riddle, after they had forced his wife to get the answer to the riddle from him, and his departure to his father's house are all set forth in Judges 14. Chapter 15 begins with his return to his wife's home, where he was told by her father that she had been given to another man. This angered Samson and he set about to destroy the crops of the Philistines, which he accomplished by means of some foxes which he caught. The Philistines, upon learning Samson's reason for this, burned his wife and her father with fire; while Samson, in turn, smote

the Philistines "hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam."

After the circumstances just related, "the Philistines went up, and encamped in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi." When the men of Judah asked them why they had come up against them, the Philistines replied, "To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us." Then three thousand men of Judah went down to Etam where Samson was, and asked him if he didn't know that the Philistines were rulers over them. Samson then explained to them why he had acted as he did against the enemy; but the men of Judah informed him that they had come to bind him, that they might deliver him into the hands of the Philistines. They refused his plea that they themselves would not bind him, and he, accordingly allowed his brethren to tie him up with two new ropes. This greatly pleased the Philistines, for they shouted when they saw him; but the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and picking up the jawbone of an ass which he saw there, he smote a thousand men.

There are two important lessons which we should learn from that which has just been said, namely, the Lord's people themselves often make the efforts of his servants very difficult, when they are trying to deliver them from the evil one; and those who are trying to accomplish God's deliverance are not always limited to conventional means in doing their work. (Ex. 4: 1-9; Zech. 4: 6-10.)

The Text Explained

The Birth and Character of Samson Foretold

(Judges 13: 2-7)

And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Be-

hold now, thou art barren, and barest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall

begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible; and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name; but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing; for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb to the day of his death.

The town of Zorah, the home of the parents of Samson, was near the border between Dan and Judah, and was therefore not far from the territory which was occupied by the Philistines, which was along the southwestern seacoast of Palestine. (See map.) It is interesting to note that the name "Dan," the father of the tribe to which Manoah belonged, means *a judge*; and that when Jacob foretold the fortunes of his sons (Gen. 49: 16, 17), he said of Dan, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider falleth backward." (Deut. 33: 22.) It does not necessarily follow that because Samson became one of the judges of Israel that Jacob was speaking specifically of him, although the reference could have included him.

As one reads through the historical portion of the Bible, he will come across the names of several outstanding men who were born of women who had previously, for a long period of time, been kept from bearing children; for example, Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, and John the Baptist. The name of the mother of Samson is not listed in the Scriptures; she is referred to only as the wife of Manoah.

The "angel of Jehovah," who appeared to the wife of Manoah, was God's special messenger to reveal unto this godly couple that they would become the parents of a son. The expression is sometimes used to indicate a manifestation of Jehovah himself. But regardless of the identity of the person in question, we know that Jehovah was, by that means, revealing his will and plan

for the future for Manoah and his wife.

Inasmuch as Samson was to be a Nazirite from the day of his birth, it was necessary that his mother assume the regulations of the order during the days of her pregnancy. The requirements for the behavior of a Nazirite are set forth in the sixth chapter of Numbers, which should be read at this point. Samson and John the Baptist are the two outstanding examples of the Nazirite order which are found in the Bible. It is generally thought by Bible students that Paul's action in Acts 21: 23-26 was in connection with a Nazirite; and it is possible that the same kind of vow is referred to in Acts 18: 18. The hair of a person with a Nazirite vow upon him could never be cut, with God's approval, during the time the vow was in force.

As one might expect, the Nazirite vow had a deep religious significance. It meant that the person who took the vow had to devote himself wholly to the Lord. It was necessary for him to abstain from anything — and everything — connected with the grape; and to avoid all contact with the dead, even his closest relatives. This would be a constant reminder to him, and to all others, of the purity which should characterize his life. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the Nazirite had to abstain from all fleshly lusts, and hold himself pure as God's instrument, being ready at all times for whatever service Jehovah might require of him.

It is well to keep in mind that Samson, according to the word of the angel of Jehovah, was to "*begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.*" And so we read, following the death of Samson, that he judged Israel twenty years (Judges 16: 31); but we learn from 2 Chronicles 28: 18, 19 that the Philistines continued to plague the Lord's people for many years longer, due to the continuous sin of the king at that time. "For Jehovah brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he had dealt wantonly in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah."

It is interesting to observe that the original word for "terrible," in

the passage now under consideration, is the same as the one from which we have *reverend* in Psalm 111: 9. Some versions of the Scriptures, in fact, render the passage just cited in these words: "Holy and terrible is his name." (*The Complete Bible—An American Translation*.) This is also the rendering of the Revised Standard Version. Young's Literal Translation has "Holy and fearful is his name." The idea in the passage now before us is that the appearance of the angel produced a feeling of fear, awe, or reverence in the wife of Manoa.

As time went on during the period of the judges, the government which they exercised gradually gave way to that of a king. It appears that the judges were not continuous, but were raised up whenever there was a need for them. The children of Israel, at the time of this lesson, were characterized more and more by a spirit of apathy, and they had, when the promise was made regarding the coming birth of Samson, fallen into subjection to the despised, uncircumcised Philistines. Whatever national spirit which may have characterized the people of the Lord in the past was dying out, and the prestige of Jehovah was giving way to that of Dagon, the god of the Philistines. The people of the Lord therefore were a conquered, tax-paying, Philistine-ridden race.

But we must always remember that Jehovah is never defeated in his plans and purposes; and because he is always present in human history, such periods as the one now under consideration seem to produce, as it were, by an inevitable reaction, their own remedies. This is what happened in the days of Samson, the Nazirite. The people of Jehovah, as has repeatedly been pointed out, were regarded as the body of Jehovah in whom he dwelt and through whom he worked. (Num. 23: 9, 21-23; 24: 8, 23.) But, as some one has observed, the mass of the people of Israel were entirely incapable of realizing such an ideal; and it appears that for that reason the presence of God in Israel, and his activities on their behalf, came to be regarded as being concentrated in, and represented by, certain orders of men, namely, prophets, priests, and the Nazirites. If one

will take the time, and will make the effort, to investigate, he will see that the three orders just named functioned throughout the history of the Lord's people. (Amos 2: 11, 12; Mic. 3: 11; Mai. 1: 6.)

The Nazirites were not a party, but functioned as individuals. They were the total abstainers, and were sometimes thought of as fanatics of the times. They allowed their hair to grow long, that is, they never cut it; and that was considered an outward mark of their consecration to God. Their abstinence from all produce of the grapevine was in marked contrast with the habits of luxury and self-indulgence, which led, by a natural tendency, to Baal-worship. The Nazirites, in short, represented in the great epochs of Hebrew history, the salutary recoil from irreligion and immorality; and this was to be the role of Samson all the days of his life.

Samson's Final Prayer

(Judges 16: 28)

And Samson called unto Jehovah, and said, O Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

Following the episode at Lehi, Samson next went to Gaza, where he saw a harlot, and went in into her. The men of the city heard that he was there; and they decided to wait at the closed gates all night, and take him the next morning. The record says, "And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all the night, saying, Let be till morning light, then we will kill him." But Samson arose at midnight, pulled up the two posts, and carried all that pertained to the gate to the top of the mountain, which was before Hebron.

But that which proved Samson's undoing was his experience with the treacherous Delilah, whom he loved and who was bribed by the Philistine lords to elicit the secret of his great strength. After three unsuccessful attempts to get him to tell her the secret of his strength, she continued her urging until his soul was vexed unto death, and he told her all his heart. "And she made

him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and shaved off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free. But he knew not that Jehovah was departed from him. And the Philistines laid hold on him, and put out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison-house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

Although blinded by the Philistines, Samson began to recover his inward sight; and it appears that the old vow of the Nazirite was again being renewed in his heart. That vow had been his at the beginning; and he evidently wanted to make it his at the end. The Philistines had gathered themselves together in large numbers, to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and to rejoice; "for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand." These heathen people, of course, did not realize it, but their attitude forced a test of strength between Jehovah and Dagon. (1 Kings 18.)

Samson's fall had resulted, not only in his own disgrace and suffering, but also in the further humiliation of his people; and now he was willing to die, if only he could be avenged of the Philistines for his two eyes. Perhaps he did not realize it, but his efforts would also bring freedom to his people; for that is what Jehovah meant for him to do. Samson probably realized that he would never see with his physical eyes again; but there was still an opportunity for him to see the face of God. This meant that the day of Samson's disgrace was also the day of God's grace; and he had the faith to claim that grace. (Heb. 11: 32.) The Philistines, as they looked upon him while he ground at the prison-house mill and made sport for them, saw Samson as being old, blind, and broken; but they never suspected, nor would they have believed, that the old fire of his younger days, which was kindled by Jehovah, was beginning to

burn in him again. The prayer of the penitent can and does reach the ear of God. (Luke 15: 11-24.)

Samson's End—Vengeance and Death

(Judges 16: 29-31)

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house rested, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Samson no doubt was greatly distressed, as the immense crowd jeered at and mocked him; but there was something which affected him more than that which they were doing to him. In ascribing their praise to Dagon, they were exalting him as the conqueror of both Jehovah and Samson: so that in mocking Samson, they were in reality mocking Jehovah. And then, like an echo from the past, there came to Samson a sense of the Divine Presence, which was followed by his swift resolution. He was willing to die, if only he could perform one act which would undo the injury, which he had done to Jehovah and his people.

And Samson's faith was equal to the occasion. The strength of the Nazirite was again his, and the old conviction surged through him, with the result that his whole being was flooded with the tide of sacred passion. Thus, we see him standing in the dignity of his newly won manhood, with his face toward the mocking crowd, which he could not see. But he could see God, with the eyes of faith, and with the divine power upon him, we can see him gathering soul and muscle for his final testimony against the evil influences, which had harassed his people so long. Imagination can still behold the scene—the tragic, stately form bowing itself against the central pillars of the huge build-

ing, the gaping roof, the appalling avalanche of timbers, and the screaming men and women, reaping that which they had sowed. But Samson's vow had been kept.

Jamieson notes that Samson's penitent and prayerful spirit seems clearly to indicate that this meditative act was not that of a vindictive suicide, but one in which he regarded himself as putting forth his strength in the capacity of a public magistrate. He must be considered therefore as dying for his country's cause; and his death was not designed nor sought, except that it might be the inevitable consequence of his great effort at saving his people, as well as avenging himself of the Philistines. And whether Samson's prayer was audible, or simply uttered in the heart, it is clear that it was both approved and accepted of God. Samson was simply carrying out God's will in meting out justice to sinful people.

The graceful end of this man of miraculous strength followed the stormy scene of the riotous assem-

bly and its sudden destruction. It appears that the Philistines who survived the crash made no effort to prevent Samson's brethren from recovering his body, and bearing it to the grave among the hills of Dan, where the dust of his father slept. The penitent heroism which marked Samson's last days makes us hesitant to emphasize his faults; and this is especially true, since the writer of Hebrews numbers him among the great men of faith. In his closing remarks concerning Samson, Josephus says,

"And indeed this man deserves to be admired for his courage and strength, and magnanimity at his death, and that his wrath against his enemies went so far as to die himself with them. But as for his being ensnared by a woman, that is to be ascribed to human nature, which is too weak to resist the temptations to that sin; but we ought to bear him witness, that in all other respects he was one of extraordinary virtue...."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What can you say regarding the character and purpose of the story of Samson?

What was unique regarding him and his activities as a judge of God's people?

Who were the judges in that period of Israel's history and what were their duties?

How should we endeavor to assess the life and character of Samson?

The Golden Text

How was Samson brought into conflict with the Philistines?

How did he come to use the jawbone of an ass in his fight against them?

What important lessons should we learn from his experience with his brethren and the Philistines?

The Birth and Character of Samson Foretold

Who were the parents of Samson and where did they live?

Who were some other notable men who were born of mothers who were formerly barren?

Who revealed to Manoah's wife that a son would be born to them?

What was said regarding the kind of life which he should live?

What was the meaning and purpose of the Nazirite vow?

What great work did the angel of Jehovah say that Samson would accomplish?

What is the meaning of the word "terrible" as it was applied to the angel?

How did the Israelites become subjected to the Philistines?

What was the relationship which Jehovah sustained toward his people of that age and how did they regard that relationship?

Samson's Final Prayer

Trace the movements of Samson until the time of this prayer.

What episode in his life proved his undoing?

What was the secret of his great strength?

How did he come to lose his strength?

What did the Philistines do to Samson when they gained the upper hand of him?

What were the results of his fall?

How did he recover his great strength?

In what way did the Philistines look upon him in his captive condition?

What basic aspect regarding Samson did they overlook?

How does Jehovah regard the prayers of his penitent children? Give reasons for your answer.

Samson's End—Vengeance and Death

What must have been the feelings of Samson as he stood before the huge crowd?

What request did he make of the boy who was leading him?

What must have been in the mind of Samson as he prepared for his final act?

Describe the end of his life.

What would you regard as a fair appraisal of his life and character?

Lesson XI—June 16, 1968

RUTH, THE DEVOTED

Lesson Text

Ruth 1: 4-6, 14-18, 22; 2: 8-10, 17-19; 4: 13-17

4 And they took them wives of the women of Mó-ab; the name of the one was Or'-pah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years.

5 And Mah'-lon and Chil'-i-on died both of them; and the woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Mó-ab: for she had heard in the country of Mó-ab how that Je-ho'-vah had visited his people in giving them bread.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Or'-pah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her god: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Je-ho'-vah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

18 And when she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, she left off speaking unto her.

22 So Na-o'-mi returned, and Ruth the Mó-ab-i-tess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Mó-ab: and they came to Beth'-le-hem in the beginning of barley harvest.

8 Then said Bó'-az unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.

9 Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young

men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou should'st take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?

17 So she gleaned in the field until even; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an e'-phah of barley.

18 And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned; and she brought forth and gave to her that which she had left after she was sufficed.

19 And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned today? and where hast thou wrought? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said. The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Bó'-az.

13 So Bó'-az took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Je-ho'-vah gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Na-o'-mi, Blessed be Je-ho'-vah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Is'-ra-el.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.

16 And Na-o'-mi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Na-o'-mi; and they called his name O'-bed: he is the father of Jes'-se, the father of David.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."* (Ruth 1: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ruth 3: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

June 10.	M.....	Elimelech's Family (Ruth 1: 1-5)
June 11.	T.....	Three Widowed Women (Ruth 1: 6-14)
June 12.	W.....	Ruth's Noble Choice (Ruth 1: 15-22)
June 13.	T.....	Ruth Gleans in Boaz' Field (Ruth 2: 1-23)
June 14.	F.....	Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3: 1-18)
June 15.	S.....	Boaz and Ruth Marry (Ruth 4: 1-13)
June 16.	S.....	Ruth, Ancestress of Christ (Ruth 4: 14-22)

TIME.—1181-1171 B.C.

PLACES.—Moab and Bethlehem.

PERSONS.—Naomi, her family, Orpah, Ruth, Boaz, and Obed.

Introduction

The little Book of Ruth contains a total of eighty-five verses, but they inclose a garden of roses, as fragrant and full of mystic calyxes, as those which the modern traveler still finds blooming and twining about the solitary ruins of Israel and Moab, this side of the Jordan and beyond. This delightful little volume describes the pastoral life among the Hebrews, during a time of peace and order; and its contents may be briefly summarized in the following words: A man of Bethlehem-judah, named Elimelech, with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left his country in the time of a famine, and went to sojourn in the land of Moab. Sometime after reaching that country, Elimelech died, and the sons married Moabitish women. Mahlon married Ruth, the principal character of the book which bears her name, and Chilion married Orpah. Both of these young men died within about ten years, and their mother, having heard that plenty was again restored to her country, determined to return to the land of Judah.

Naomi was accompanied by both of her widowed daughters-in-law, as she began her journey back to Bethlehem; but after they had gone some distance, she urged them to return to their own country, and to their kindred. Orpah, after an affectionate farewell, returned; but Ruth insisted on going all the way with her mother-in-law, which she was finally permitted to do. The two women arrived in Bethlehem about the time of barley harvest;

and Ruth went into the fields to glean for their support. The field into which she happened to go belonged to Boaz, a near kinsman of Elimelech, her father-in-law, and a prominent man of the city. When Boaz learned who she was, he ordered that she be treated kindly, and appointed both her food and drink with his own servants. And when it was made known to him that she herself was by marriage a near kinswoman, he proposed to marry her himself, if a nearer kinsman who was then living should refuse to take her. The matter was placed before the nearer kinsman, and he, after declining to take her for himself, surrendered his rights to her, according to the customs of the times, before the elders at the gate of the city. Boaz then married Ruth, and she became the mother of Obed, who in turn was "the father of Jesse, the father of David."

The Old Testament Scriptures do not reveal a sweeter, nor more beautiful, character than that of Ruth; nor does any literature contain a lovelier story than the one found in the book from which our lesson is taken. Goethe, at the period of his enthusiasm for the East, according to Humboldt, called the story the loveliest specimen of epic and idyllic poetry we possess. War and bloodshed, and many of the sinful practices which are common to the fallen race, are found in Judges and First Samuel, which precede and follow, respectively, the book from which our lesson text for today is taken; but between them is the Book of Ruth, which has been

described as a beautiful valley, full of flowers and fertile fields, and with a gentle brook quietly singing as it flows through the meadow. The Book of Ruth is a wonderful story of love, and of holy character; and it fills that part of the Old Testament with its fragrance.

Richard G. Moulton notes that the story of Ruth is the very ideal type of the Idyll. He continues: "So delicate in its transparent simplicity that the worse service one can do to the story is to comment on it. Suffice it to say, that the warp and woof of the tale is a friendship between two women, and the grand climax up to which all is working is the birth of a baby. Instead of war, of national strife, of political struggle, we have here great harvest festivals, ceremonial transfers of land, family contingencies of such as hard times and emigration, marriage, and the strange process by which an extinct family might be restored to the genealogies of Israel: such little things as are great to the little man of every day life. Even in the little there are gradations: in this book are found such minutia as attentions shown to a shy stranger girl at the harvest feast, petty contrivances for giving her unfair advantages in the gleaning field; details still more minute—how Ruth pockets the scraps at the feast to bring home to her mother-in-law, who has been sitting solitary at home while she herself has had the excitement of the harvesting. Trifles like these, fitted into their natural frame the idyll, have kept afloat over some thirty centuries of time; and this story has done more to enable us to live over again in remote Hebrew

antiquity than all the heroic achievements of *Joshua* and *Judges* put together."

Writers of textbooks on rhetoric have taken delight in citing the Book of Ruth as a perfect example of simple narrative; and modern specifications for short-story writing are admirably met in the book now before us. "Plot is simply thinking in terms of scene and suspense." Scenes consist "in significant detail of action, character, and setting." The author of Ruth "holds suspense by dramatic detail," and the final suspense is resolved "just before the curtain." (See *The Art of Composition*, by F. T. Blanchard (Ginn & Co., Boston, 1934), pp. 457, 458, 477.) It is not known when or by whom the Book of Ruth was written. The events of the narrative transpired in the days when the judges judged; but with the mention of David as one of the descendants of Boaz and Ruth, it is fair to conclude that the actual writing was not done until after his day. The Moabites were the descendants of Lot by his older daughter (Gen. 19: 30-38), and their country was east of the Dead Sea, between the brooks of Arnon, on the north, and Zered, on the south. It is said that the mountains of Moab were visible in Bethlehem. (Deut. 34: 1-3.) The attitude which Jehovah expected his people to maintain toward the Ammonites and the Moabites is set forth in Deuteronomy 23: 3-6. That which has been said in this introduction is the general setting of the lesson for today; and all who study it will be greatly benefited, if they will read the entire Book of Ruth.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

An Ominous Venture and a Penitent Retreat

(Ruth 1: 4-6, 14-18, 22)

And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died both of them; and the

woman was left of her two children and of her husband.

When Elimelech and his family left the land of their nativity, they went to an alien land. There were not many miles between the two countries, so far as distance goes; but that journey represented a transition which meant much more than a modern emigration from America

to England. The two countries just mentioned are divided by the Atlantic Ocean; but Israel and Moab were separated by something, in comparison with which, the great Atlantic is but a mill-pond, namely, a difference in religion. There was no land so far away, in the estimation of a pious Jew, as the land of a foreign worship; and he, accordingly, measured the distance to any country to the space which separated it from Jehovah. It was therefore a tremendous journey which this family of Bethlehem took, a journey not to be estimated in miles, not to be gauged by the intervention of land and seas; but to have its goal determined by the attitude of the mind.

It is not an uncommon practice now for Christian people, those who wear the name of Christ, even as Elimelech wore the name of his God, to place themselves under conditions which practically rob the Lord's cause of their influences and services. Sometimes this is done under the pretext of "making a living," or to gain educational advantages. It is, of course, perfectly in order for Christian people to provide for the needs of their families and themselves; but not to the extent that evil is done that good may come. (Matt. 6: 33.) And what is true with reference to the earning of a livelihood, is also true regarding an education. Christian parents and young people should always consider the effects of such "moves" on their part; for, as has been remarked, "it is a fearful thing to set little store by our religious advantages and blessings, when God has given them to us. It is of the greatest importance, in choosing a place where you may perhaps dwell for years, to consider well whether you are likely to meet with help, or hindrances, on your way to heaven. If you should ever be called upon to make such a choice, I advise you to let it be a matter of earnest prayer to God, that he would guide and direct your steps."

From all the information we have regarding the activities of the family from Bethlehem, it appears that no serious question was raised regarding the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion to Moabitish women, notwithstanding Jehovah's an-

nounced attitude toward the people of Moab. (Read again Deuteronomy 23: 3-6; Nehemiah 13: 1-3.) How can there be faithfulness to God in a union, one member of which is not permitted to participate in the worship of Jehovah? God, in all ages of the world, so far as inspired history is concerned, has always had a uniform law on the subject of his people's marrying out of covenant relationship with him. Such unions are fraught with grave dangers, the consequences of which may lead a multitude of souls to perdition.

But young people are not always to be blamed for such mixed marriages: their parents and religious leaders, not only in many instances do not teach them the truth regarding such unions, but it frequently happens that their parents actually encourage them in such relationships. The marriages of Mahlon and Chilion took place, according to Josephus, during the lifetime of their father, and with his consent and arrangement. This famous Jewish historian says, "And upon the happy prosperity of his affairs there [that is, in Moab], he took for his sons wives of the Moabites, Orpah for Chilion, and Ruth for Mahlon." (Ant. 5: 9, 1.)

William Evans notes that, like many parents today, Elimelech and Naomi wanted their children "married off." How many such parents, even in so-called Christian homes, who are so anxious to have their daughters "married off," that they appear not to care anything about the moral and spiritual condition of the men who are seeking the hand of their daughters; if only they have money, position, standing. Many sweet, trusting Christian young women have had their lives blighted and blasted, and their faith ruined, by such an ungodly and forbidden alliance. It is usually a fatal mistake for any woman, young or old, to marry a man, in the hope of converting him; and the odds are generally higher, in the case of young people. Such an expectation is not worth the venture; it usually works the other way, as Tennyson, in *Locksley Hall*, very clearly points out:

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower
to his level day by day,

What is fine within thee growing
coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is:
thou are mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature
will have weight to drag thee
down.

He will hold thee, when his pas-
sion shall have spent its novel
force,

Something better than his dog, a
little dearer than his horse.

But what can be expected in the
way of influence from parents, who
lose their grip on God, and are prac-
tically out of fellowship with him?
How can they lead their children to
anything higher, than that to which
they themselves have attained?
Christ said to Simon Peter, "And do
thou, when once thou hast turned
again, establish thy brethren," the
practical meaning of which is, A
person must be right with God him-
self, before he is in a position of in-
fluencing others in the direction of
Christ. If parents do not have
Christ in their own hearts, how can
they effectively plead with their
children to allow him to direct their
lives? Death will come to all, as it
did to Mahlon and Chilion; and
where will it find the children of
professed Christians who ignore
God's law?

*And they lifted up their voice,
and wept again: and Orpah kissed
her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave
unto her.*

Naomi apparently did not want to
encourage or permit her daugh-
ters-in-law to accompany her to her
homeland, with any false hopes in
their hearts. This reminds us of
similar teaching on the part of
Christ. (Luke 14: 25ff; Matt. 10:
34-39.) Whether or not one is will-
ing to go to and remain with Christ
depends upon what is in his heart;
but we should always remember
that he will never refuse to accept
nor make it difficult for any willing
soul to be at home with the Lord.
(John 5: 40; 6: 37.)

*And she said, Behold, thy sister-
in-law is gone back unto her people,
and unto her god: return thou after
thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said,
Entreat me not to leave thee, and to
return from following after thee;
for whither thou goest, I will go;
and where thou lodgest, I will*

*lodge; thy people shall be my peo-
ple, and thy God my God; where
thou diest, will I die, and there will
I be buried: Jehovah do so to me,
and more alio, if aught but death
part thee and me. And when she
saw that she was stedfastly minded
to go with her, she left off speaking
unto her.*

When Naomi asked Ruth to imi-
tate Orpah's example in turning to
her people and her god, she was evi-
dently trying to get Ruth to realize
that the decision which she would
have to make must be hers, and hers
alone. This, in effect, meant that
Ruth's life had now reached its most
decisive moment. It was the mo-
ment when the great choice had to
be made on which everything, re-
garding her fulfillment of God's
purpose, so far as she was con-
cerned, depended; and what a crisis
it was! How isolated, how seem-
ingly alone, it found her! So far in
life's experiences she had moved
step by step with Orpah. Now
Orpah her sister-in-law—Orpah,
side by side with whom she had ac-
cepted the hand of her Israelite hus-
band; Orpah, who with her had
bowed under the stroke of widow-
hood; Orpah, who with her had
started to a c c o m p a n y their
mother-in-law on her return to
Bethlehem—now Orpah was gone.

Behind Ruth, in the sweet light of
reminiscence, was Moab, the home
of her childhood, of her father and
mother: the scene of her friend-
ships, and the center of her inter-
ests. Before her was Israel, with its
dark, forbidding hills, its alien faces,
and its unknown and undreamed of
trials. What called her there? To
outward appearances, there was lit-
tle. Ease, pleasure, and even com-
mon prudence, as Naomi had
pointed out, bade her return to the
land where hope and love were
waiting for one so winning. But
Ruth heard a voice which we cannot
hear. It was the voice of duty, of
compassion, of faith, and of love;
and that voice called her on: it
would not let her go. And, too, that
desolate widow who stood before
her struck her heart with a heroic
note. And not only that, for it was
no mere Naomi whom she saw
standing before her in piteous fare-
well. It was her dead husband's
mother; nay, more, it was her dead

husband's faith, her dead husband's God. Can she go forward to make these her own? She can, and she determined that she would; and with a resolution conveyed in suppressed fire, Ruth refused to quit the side of her mother-in-law. The words in which the resolution was uttered constitute the most determined, the most decisive, and the most unhesitating confession of love in all literature. There was nothing else for Naomi to say; and neither will the tempter continue to test us, when we make a determined resolution to follow the Lord. (James 4: 7; 1 Pet. 5: 6-9.)

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, with her, who returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

This verse gives the setting for the rest of the story.

"Echoes of Mercy and Whispers of Love"

(Ruth 2: 8-10, 17-19)

Then said Boaz unto Ruth. Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And then thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?

Ruth's modesty captured the heart of the God-fearing and prosperous Boaz—a modesty that was indeed the outcome of a genuine humility of heart. She asked if she might glean and gather grain after his reapers, a privilege which she did not claim as a right, but as a favor; and her modesty was further emphasized by her grateful and graceful acknowledgment, when he took knowledge of the fact that she was a stranger and an alien. Her love, willing sacrifice, her sublime, beautiful, womanly courage and daring; her devotion to an aged woman who

was bereaved, despoiled, homeless, and who felt herself cast away by Jehovah, all combined to draw out the fire and strength of the soul of Boaz; and caused him to call upon Ruth the name of his God: "Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee or Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge." Thus, Boaz sets Ruth's devotion in the soft, rosy radiance of his religion; and it burned and shone with the light and color of all manner of precious stones.

The benedictions of Boaz fell on the heart of Ruth, like showers on newly mowed grass. Hitherto, she had known only sorrow and shame; no Israelite had recognized her, or helped her; no one had showed appreciation for the love which she bestowed upon her mother-in-law, or any wish to welcome her to the faith and privileges of Israel. To all but Boaz, she was simply "the Moabite"—a stranger from the covenant, and an alien from the commonwealth of God's people. But now, a man whom all Bethlehem loved and respected, blessed her for her goodness, and assured her of the protection and blessings of the God of Israel.

So she gleaned in the field until even; and she beat out that which she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she took it up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth and gave to her that which she had left after she was sufficed. And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where hast thou wrought? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to-day is Boaz.

What satisfaction must have come to Ruth after the experiences of that day—her first day to glean in the alien grain-fields! (Lev. 19: 9, 10; Deut. 24: 19-21.) She had worked hard, but her labors had not been in vain. She was lonely as she began her work, and had toiled among strangers; but when the day closed she had friends, and the admiration and good wishes of the master of the

field. Not only did she have the barley (about three and one quarter pecks, which was more than one would expect from a day's glean-ing), which she took to her mother-in-law; but she was also able to take home to her peace of mind and rejoicing of heart, or, which is the same thing, food for the spirit, as well as sustenance for the body. Ruth's own heart was gladdened, too, as they sat together that evening in their humble cottage, and talked of the events of the day. But it was Naomi who saw a star of hope, when Ruth told her that she had gleaned in the field of Boaz.

Inside Glimpses: "Home, Sweet Home"

Ruth 4: 13-17

Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and Jehovah gave her conception, and she bare a son. And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him. And Naomi took, the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Again the curtain rises for one brief moment, to give us a sweet glimpse of domestic life in the household of Boaz. We behold Ruth, a happy wife, and still a happier mother. We also see Naomi, spending the calm evening of her beclouded life, not separated from the abiding love of her devoted daughter-in-law; but living once more in the new representative of the house of Elimelech. And it is to her, rather than to Ruth, that the congratulations of the women are addressed. For the babe, in a very true sense, was hers, the restorer of her life, and the nourisher of her old age, the builder up of 'the fortunes of her house; because in him the great love of her daughter-in-law had become a visible and an embodied fact.

No finer tribute could have been paid to Ruth, that which her neighbors and friends spoke after the birth of her child. All feeling of jealousy against the alien, who had come among them, had been forgotten. They gave recognition to the fact that Ruth, not only loved Naomi, but that she was better to her than seven sons. This, coming from the women of Bethlehem who, at first probably envied the good fortune of Ruth, and looked upon her union with one of their best citizens as a slight upon their own daughters, was a splendid tribute to the qualities of both head and heart which Ruth possessed.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Give a summary of the Book of Ruth.

Discuss the nature and place of the book in the Sacred Canon.

What kind of impression does Ruth make on the mind of the readers?

An Ominous Venture and a Penitent Retreat

What significance was attached to the move of Elimelech and his family to Moab?

What application does the principle involved have in our day?

Under what circumstances, apparently, did the sons come to marry women of Moab?

What about mixed marriages now and what does the Bible teach on the subject?

Why do people today act according to the Principle exemplified by Orpah and Ruth with reference to Naomi?

Why had Ruth reached the period of a great crisis in her life?

In what way did she meet it?

"Echoes of Mercy and Whispers of Love"

Who was Boaz and what kind of an impression did Ruth make upon him?

What did he, in turn, do for Ruth?

How did his kindness to her affect her?

What great lesson can we learn from this for our day?

What must have been the feeling of Ruth at the close of her first day's labor in the field as a gleaner?

Who were permitted to glean and why was that privilege bestowed upon them?

How was Naomi impressed when Ruth reported the day's activities to her?

What star of hope did she see and why was it made visible to her?

Inside Glimpses: "Home, Sweet Home"

What pictures of Ruth and Naomi are made possible at this point in the story?

Why did the women congratulate Naomi, rather than Ruth, upon the birth of the baby?
Why would he mean so much to Naomi?

What tribute did the women pay to Ruth at this period in the narrative?
Why was it such a great tribute and what lesson should we learn from it?

Lesson XII—June 23, 1968

SOLOMON, THE WISE MAN

Lesson Text

1 Kings 1: 28-31; 3: 4-9; 10: 23-25

28 Then king David answered and said, Call to me Bath-she'-ba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.

29 And the king sware, and said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

30 Verily as I sware unto thee by Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, saying, Assuredly Sol'-o-mon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; verily so will I do this day.

31 Then Bath-she'-ba bowed with her face to the earth, and did obeisance to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

4 And the king went to Gib'-e-on to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Sol'-o-mon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gb'-e-on Je-ho'-vah appeared to Sol'-o-mon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

6 And Sol'-o-mon said. Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great lovingkindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in

uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great lovingkindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7 And now, O Je-ho'-vah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in.

8 And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?

23 So king Sol'-o-mon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.

24 And all the earth sought the presence of Sol'-o-mon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

25 And they brought every man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge."* (Eccles. 12: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 10: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

June 17.	M.....	Solomon, David's Successor (1 Chron. 28: 1-10)
June 18.	T.....	Solomon Chooses Wisdom (2 Chron. 1: 7-13)
June 19.	W.....	David's Last Charge (1 Kings 2: 1-4)
June 20.	T.....	Solomon's Great Wisdom (1 Kings 10: 1-13)
June 21.	F.....	Solomon's Wise Judgment (1 Kings 3: 23-28)
June 22.	S.....	Solomon's Great Wealth (1 Kings 4: 20-28)
June 23.	S.....	Solomon's Apostasy (1 Kings 11: 5-13)

TIME.—1015-984 B.C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and Gihon.

PERSONS.—David, Bath-sheba, and Solomon.

Introduction

Solomon, one of the younger sons of David, was chosen to succeed his father as king; and he became the third ruler of what we know as the united kingdom. Solomon, like his father and Saul, the first king, ruled for approximately forty years; and it should be pointed out that he was the last ruler of the united kingdom, for it was he who was directly responsible for its division. It is doubtful if any king ever ascended his throne under more favorable circumstances, or who had better prospects for a successful reign, than Solomon. He had both the training and the example of his father to aid him; and his own attitude was such that Jehovah blessed him beyond that of any other king, either before or after him.

If we look at Solomon from the purely national and secular standpoint, he was without a doubt the greatest king Israel ever had, and the only one who could take his place beside the magnificent potentates of the ancient East. The glory which Solomon enjoyed, and the impression which he made upon his contemporaries, are recorded in some detail in the first ten chapters of First Kings. So great was the splendor of this monarch, that when Jesus wanted to portray the exquisite beauty of the lilies of the field,

he said, "Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matt. 6: 29.)

The reign of Solomon has been spoken of as the Augustan age of the Jewish nation, with this added peculiarity he was not only its Augustus, but also, according to tradition, its Aristotle. A new world of thought was opened up to the Israelites when Solomon came to the throne. But notwithstanding the fact that he was influenced by worthy and pious aspirations, especially at the beginning of his reign, it will have to be admitted that on the whole his policies were essentially selfish. His chief motives were the love of pleasure and power, of wealth, splendor, and fame; and the main object before him was to promote his own interests, and strengthen and glorify the dynasty which his father David had founded. All of this required that he adopt measures which were obnoxious to many who were around him, and oppressive to the poor. Solomon's morning sun rose beautifully; but in the evening it sank amid the clouds and darkness of earthly exhalations, which made it difficult to say, with any degree of certainty, how or where it would rise in the morning.

The Golden Text

"Because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge." The *Book of Ecclesiastes*,

from which the words of the golden text are taken, has been described as a philosophy which ponders the problem of human existence. Adam Clarke calls it the finest monument we have of the wisdom of the ancients, except the *Book of Job*. Hailey, in contrasting *Ecclesiastes* with the latter, notes that *Job* was the case of a man who came through terrible suffering to a triumphant end, while *Ecclesiastes* was the case of a man who, through luxury and human glory, fell to the depths of gloom and despair. The writer of *Ecclesiastes* clearly understood that the world itself will pass away; but he knew that the people who live in the world will have to stand in judgment and account for their

deeds, whether they are good or bad: and it was for that reason that he appealed to the young in years to remember their Creator.

While no one knows for certain who wrote the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, but it appears fairly evident from the opening words of the book that the "Preacher," referred to throughout the composition, was Solomon; but that does not necessarily mean that he was the actual writer. However, regardless of who may have written the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, it is a part of the Inspired Canon of the Old Testament, and its lessons are valuable to all who will consider them. But if one will study the history of Solomon himself, as recorded in the Old Testament, it will be easy for him to see that it would be extremely unlikely that the king would continue, in his latter days, to

be the effectual teacher of truth, as it is set forth in the book from which the words of the golden text are taken. But the writer could take the words of wisdom which were uttered by Solomon during his lifetime, and make them available for all time to come; so that it could truthfully be said that the Preacher still taught the people knowledge.

The writer of *Ecclesiastes* says that because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge. Solomon's wisdom came from God (1 Kings 3: 4-15), and this implies that he was an inspired man. Something of the wisdom of Solomon, and the knowledge which he taught the people, may be learned from the following passage; "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and

largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom." (1 Kings 4: 29-34.)

The Text Explained

David's Pledge to Bath-sheba Reaffirmed

(1 Kings 1: 28-31)

Then King David answered and said, Call to me Bath-sheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. And the king sware, and said, As Jehovah liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, verily as I sware unto thee by Jehovah, the God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; verily so will I do this day. Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did obeisance to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

The time was rapidly approaching for the passing of David, and there was, of course, great anxiety regarding his successor. Bath-sheba, the former wife of Uriah, was a favorite of David, and he had evidently solemnly promised her that her son Solomon would succeed to the throne. But there were other and older sons of David who apparently felt that they were entitled to be the next king; and among the number was Adonijah, seemingly the oldest of David's living sons. He did not wait for his father to die before making his attempt to occupy the throne, and so set in motion a scheme to usurp the throne at once. This aroused Nathan to action, and

he called upon Bath-sheba to go in person to David, and present the claim of Solomon. (Read 1 Kings 1: 1-27.)

It is clear from the context that the customary Eastern protocol was observed, to a large extent, even among the members of David's own household; and while Bath-sheba did not employ the exact form of language which was suggested to her by Nathan, she did, however, conform to the custom which required that she leave the room when Nathan came in. Although there is nothing in the record which says so, but it does appear clear from David's reaction to Bath-sheba's "reminder" that the king had indeed promised her that her son Solomon would succeed to the throne. This was the first time in Hebrew history that the reigning monarch had arranged for his successor to inherit the kingdom. Moses had warned, before Israel entered the land of Canaan, that Jehovah would reserve the right to himself to choose the king (Deut. 17: 14, 15); and that was done in the cases of both Saul and David.

But beginning with the house of David a new feature entered the picture, namely, all kings from that time and onward would be of the family of David; and it would be natural to suppose, if nothing more were said on the subject, that the

oldest living son would inherit the throne. This, as already suggested, was probably one motive which moved Adonijah to act as he did. But notwithstanding the fact that the kingdom had been vouchsafed to the house of David, Jehovah still claimed the right to name the king. "But the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, . . . Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever." (1 Chron. 22: 8-10.)

It was probably this revelation to David which moved him to promise Bathsheba that her son Solomon would succeed to the throne.

After receiving the king's word that the oath regarding Solomon would be respected, Bath-sheba, in keeping with the custom of the court, demonstrated her affection for her husband; and while she no doubt would have been happy to see her son on the throne, she evidently would also have been happy to have her husband continue as king, as long as Jehovah, in his providence, saw fit. All of this was in sharp contrast with Adonijah's attitude, who sought to establish himself on the throne as early as possible. This reminds us of some people, even in our day, who seem to try to hurry the passing of their parents and other benefactors, so that they themselves may enjoy the fruits of their labors. But, as quaint old Matthew Henry observes, we should earnestly desire the prolonging of useful lives, however it may be the postponing of any advantages of our own.

Solomon's Prayer at Gibeon

(1 Kings 3: 4-9)

And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. In Gibeon Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant

David my father great lovingkindness, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great lovingkindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Jehovah my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this thy great people?

It was after Solomon was firmly established upon the throne that he made his visit to Gibeon, about five miles northwest of Jerusalem, for the purpose of offering his sacrifice; and it was while he was there that Jehovah made the first of three significant appearances to him. When Jehovah appeared to Solomon in a dream at the time now under consideration, he asked him what he should give him; and the young king, with the heart and attitude of a child, requested wisdom, so that he could be a righteous and successful ruler. The Lord was pleased with Solomon's response, and granted, not only the wisdom which he asked, but other great blessings as well; so that he became the wisest king who ever lived. (1 Kings 3: 10-15.)

The incident which we are now considering, at the very threshold of Solomon's reign, was perhaps the greatest single event in his life, not excepting the building, opening, and dedication of the temple. High thoughts surged through his mind, both inspiring and humbling him. As he measured himself by the stature of his father, Solomon could but think of himself as a little child, and in need of those blessing which could be obtained only from others. Or to change the figure somewhat, he became "poor in spirit" which, of course, is the very opposite of pride. Pride has been described as the first of the deadly sins of which people are guilty, because it both shuts the doors of the mind and heart, and

takes away the key to understanding and fellowship.

And just as pride does so much to destroy one, so poverty of spirit, as Jesus declares in his Sermon on the Mount, is the first of the virtues which opens the way into the kingdom of heaven. When one is empty of self-importance and self-righteousness, he has the capacity for the truly great things which the Lord both has and is able to bestow upon him. Solomon was indeed no longer a child in years, but he still maintained the childlike spirit which is so essential to acceptance with God. With an open mind, he sought to see the truth; and, obedient in spirit, he apparently was ready to follow wherever that truth might lead him. And so, however dark and confused the problem of life may appear to the humble child of God, he should always make the effort to cleanse from the lens of his own mind and soul the befogging preconceptions and presumptions, which are all too common to the human race, so that he can catch whatever light which may come to him from God's revealed truth.

The failure to make the kind of preparation just suggested was demonstrated by Pilate, as Jesus stood before him and spoke of the truth. "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" But the governor, like so many today, turned away from Jesus before the latter could answer his question, or, which is the same thing, tell him what the truth is. (John 18: 37, 38.) Truth, of course, will never be revealed to those who are unwilling to listen to the Lord; but when people manifest the spirit and attitude of little children, they are in position to be blessed of God beyond measure. (Isa. 57: 15; 66: 2.) Such were the spirit and attitude of Solomon when Jehovah appeared to him in the dream at Gibeon; but that heavenly light which he saw afterwards faded within him, and the glory of his great resolution died within his soul.

The Wealth and Splendor of a Magnificent Reign

(1 Kings 10: 23-25)

So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his tribute, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

Solomon did indeed exceed "all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom"; and it staggers the imagination when one attempts to visualize what he might have become, if he had remained faithful to God. The very next two paragraphs of the inspired history of Solomon begin the description of his downfall. (1 Kings 10: 26-11: 8; Neh. 13: 23-27.) It was a strange and startling step from Solomon the wise temple-builder to Solomon the sensual sybarite, filling Jerusalem and its environs with shrines for the worship of heathen gods; but that is exactly what happened, as one may see by reading the history referred to above.

When Moses delivered the three addresses which make up most of the Book of Deuteronomy, he gave some specific instruction regarding the conduct of kings, in the days when they should reign over the people of Jehovah; and furthermore, the king himself was required to make a copy of this law and keep it before him, that he might learn and obey that which Jehovah had commanded. (Deut. 17: 14-20.) But one has only to read the passage just cited, along with 1 Kings 10: 14-11: 3, in order to see that Solomon violated, to the letter, every one of those prohibitions.

And as one begins to read of the declining years of Solomon, he naturally thinks of that which that king could have been; but the sad words of the record reveal something of the gathering gloom. It was during this time that Jehovah appeared to Solomon the third time, and pronounced his doom. (1 Kings 11: 9-13.) How can we account for this great change in the one-time wise king Solomon? The answer to this question seems fairly simple,

and it involves a lesson which is desperately needed today, namely, he allowed the world to enter into his heart and life; and when that was done, Jehovah was driven out. (Matt. 6: 24.)

Instead of exerting an influence upon the world about him, by dedicating himself to the cause of Jehovah, Solomon yielded himself to the influence of the world, and took all the homage which it brought to him. In his effort to become worldly great; the king surrounded himself with influences which demoralized, pulled to pieces, and brought to decay the spiritual qualities which he possessed. The result was that the morality which was his in his earlier days, was corrupted and gradually lost in the degeneration which followed.

The sensual life of Solomon bore unmistakable fruit in the closing years of his reign. No one has ever been successful in defying the inexorable law of the harvest. (Gal. 6: 7, 8.) Carnality will eat its way into and destroy character, as surely as an unquenched fire destroys a building, and leaves it a heap of charred debris. The wail of Lord Byron could well have been the wail of Solomon, and for the same reason:

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief,
Are mine alone!

The twilight years of Solomon also reveal the outcome of marriages where there is no accord in the deeper things of life, nor a common faith. The foreign wives whom he brought into his palace had no sympathy with Israel's faith in Jehovah; and they did not hesitate therefore to have Solomon build altars to their gods, and offer incense to them. (Read again Nehemiah 13: 26.)

Furthermore, the twilight years of

Solomon bore grim testimony to the fact that it is possible for a man to fall from God's favor, after a season of fellowship with him. (1 Cor. 9: 27.) The question naturally arises, Did the sun go down upon the sins of Solomon to rise no more? Two significant facts seems to indicate that it did, namely, (1) the king, so far as the record goes, showed no signs of penitence when he was rebuked; and (2) the shrines which he erected to the heathen gods were allowed to remain. (2 Kings 23: 13.) Thus, so far as we know, the light of Solomon was swallowed in total darkness. There was apparently for him no evening star, but only sadness of farewell, and the mournful moaning of the bar, when he put out to sea.

Solomon and Paul were probably about the same age when their earthly careers ended, but what a difference between their twilight experiences! Solomon spent his final days in a palace, where the air was filled with the fragrance of incense which had been offered to alien gods. Paul's last abiding place was a dark dungeon, but it was fragrant with the Divine Presence. It would be difficult to find two statements which indicate a wider difference in the closing experiences of two men, than those in 1 Kings 11: 4 and 2 Timothy 4: 6-8.

If the closing words of Ecclesiastes were those of Solomon, they must have been spoken or written during his earlier days; but regardless of their authorship, they are associated with the wise king of Israel, and no more wholesome advice could be found anywhere than that which they contain, namely, "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil " (Eccles. 12: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Under what kind of circumstances did Solomon begin his reign as king of Israel?

What were some of the characteristics of his reign?
What kind of a king, on the whole, did he make?

The Golden Text

From what type of literature were the words of the golden text taken?

What was the principal purpose of the author of Ecclesiastes in writing the book?

Who was the "preacher" referred to? Give reasons for your answer.

What change must have come over Solomon as a teacher during his lifetime?

In what way does the *Preacher* continue to teach the people knowledge?

David's Pledge to Bath-sheba Reaffirmed

What circumstances led up to the reaffirmation of David's pledge to Bath-sheba?

How did Bath-sheba come to go in before king David?

What right did Jehovah reserve for himself regarding the kings of his people?

What apparently prompted Adonijah to act in such haste regarding the throne?

Under what circumstances did David make his promise to Bath-sheba regarding Solomon?

How did she react to the king's reaffirmation of his promise?

Solomon's Prayer at Gibeon

When and under what circumstances did Solomon go to Gibeon?

Why did Jehovah appear to him at that time?

What was Solomon's response to that which God said to him and how did Jehovah regard it?

What did Solomon ask for and why?

What attitude of mind and heart did he display at this time?

What effects do poverty of spirit and pride have in the lives of people?

Why is pride so dangerous to one's well-being?

What great promise is made to the poor in spirit?

What attitude should God's children always manifest toward the baffling problems of life?

How did Pilate illustrate the principle which is contained in this lesson?

To whom will Jehovah always make known his truth?

The Wealth and Splendor of a Magnificent Reign

What does the text say regarding the reign of Solomon?

What great change came over his life in later years?

Why did he fail in his attitude toward God?

What lesson does this have for us, that is, how is it possible for us to fail too?

What law can no man successfully defy? Why is this true?

What lesson do we learn from Solomon's life regarding mixed marriages?

How do we know that it is possible for a child of God to fall away from his favor?

What is the greatest lesson that we can learn from Solomon?

Lesson XIII—June 30, 1968

ESTHER, THE QUEEN

Lesson Text

Esth. 2: 5-11, 16-18; 4: 13-17

5 There was a certain Jew in Shu'-shan the palace, whose name was Mor'-de-cai, the son of Ja'-ir, the son of Shim'-e-i, the son of Kish, a Ben'-ja-mite.

6 Who had been carried away from Je-ru'-sa-lem with the captives that had been carried away with Jec-o-ni'-ah king of Ju'-dah, whom Neb-u-chad-nez'-zar the king of Bab'-ylon had carried away.

7 And he brought up Ha-das'-sah, that is Es'-ther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mor'-de-cai took her for his own daughter.

8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shu'-shan the palace, to the custody of He'-gai, that Es'-ther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of He'-gai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and

she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with her portions, and the seven maidens who were meet to be given her out of the king's house; and he removed her and her maidens to the best place of the house of the women.

10 Es'-ther had not made known her people nor her kindred; for Mor'-de-cai had charged her that she should not make it known.

11 And Mor'-de-cai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Es'-ther did, and what would become of her.

* * * * *

16 So Es'-ther was taken unto king A-has-u-e'-rus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Te'-beth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Es'-ther above all the women, and she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her

head, and made her queen instead of Vash'ti.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Es'-ther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king.

13 Then Mor'-de-cai bade them return answer unto Es'-ther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews

from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

15 Then Es'-ther bade them return answer unto Mor'-de-cai,

16 Go. gather together all the Jews that are present in Shu'-shan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mor'-de-cai went his way, and did according to all that Es'-ther had commanded him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esth. 4: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Esth. 9: 22-32.

Daily Bible Readings

June 24.	M.....	Feast of Ahasuerus (Esth. 1: 1-8)
June 25.	T.....	Vashti Refuses to Appear (Esth. 1: 9-12)
June 26.	W.....	Esther Chosen (Esth. 2: 1-11)
June 27.	T.....	Haman's Decree Against the Jews (Esth. 3: 1-15)
June 28.	F.....	Mordecai's Distress (Esth. 4: 1-17)
June 29.	S.....	Esther Intercedes for the Jews (Esth. 5: 1-13)
June 30.	S.....	Haman Hanged; Esther and Mordecai Honored (Esth. 6, 7, 8)

TIME.—478-473 B.C.

PLACE.—Shushan.

PERSONS.—Mordecai, Esther, Ahasuerus, and others.

Introduction

The *Book of Esther* not only contains a beautiful story; it is unique among the books of the Old Testament Canon. This is to say that there is no other book like it in that part of divine revelation. It is, in fact, the only book in the entire Bible in which the name of a Divine Being does not appear. The truth of the statement just made is clearly demonstrated, when one reads the American Standard Version of the Scriptures. The Book of Esther, in the Hebrew Bible, belonged to a group known as the *Hagiographa*, that is, the *Sacred Writings*, and more particularly, the *Five Rolls* or the *Megilloth*, a division of the Sacred Writings, composed of Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; and they were read in the synagogues to commemorate, respectively, the feasts of passover, Pentecost, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the feasts of tabernacles, and Purim.

The *Book of Esther* is extremely important for understanding the beliefs, customs, and practices of Judaism; and while it was listed last in the Megilloth of the Hebrew Bible, it was actually first in the hearts of the Jewish people among whom it was known universally as *the Scroll*, or *Megillah*, the singular of Megilloth.

While the *Book of Esther*, as already noted, was used by the Jewish people to commemorate the feast of Purim, its greatest value to us is its teaching on the great subject of divine providence. God's name, indeed, does not appear anywhere in the book, but no one can read it without seeing his hand throughout the narrative. In fact, its principal purpose is to show God's providential care for his people; and it is entirely in keeping with the nature of the book to speak of it as God amid the shadows. The book which we are now considering, like that of

Ruth, is a model of that phase of literature known as the short story. *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that the style of Esther is dramatic and rapid in its development of incident. Scene after scene springs into place, until the climax of difficulty is reached, and the knot is tied so securely, as to make it appear that escape is impossible. Then the knot is untied with wondrous dexterity, so that the desired end, on the part of the afflicted, is easily reached.

The heroine of the story is Esther, the cousin and adopted daughter of Mordecai, a devout and God-fearing Jew who lived in Shushan the palace. This father and daughter work together throughout the story, and are both in high places when the narrative comes to an end. Esther possessed exceptional physical beauty, personal charm, and a courageous character, all of which she used with great effectiveness on

the king. While hesitant at first, she was presently made to see her own responsibility with reference to the crisis which had come upon the Jewish people; and she then did not shrink from taking her life, as it were, into her own hands. Esther herself was a Jewess, a young woman of a conquered, and therefore despised and hated race; but she and Mordecai were able to keep this truth from king Ahasuerus until she became the queen, and even afterward until it became necessary for her to reveal her relationship to the Hebrew people, in order to save them from the death which had been decreed by Haman. Esther knew that the king had chosen her as his queen, because of her personal beauty; but that did not spoil her, as the elevation to power had ruined the prime minister. Those who study this lesson should, by all means, read the entire *Book of Esther*.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Introduction of Esther and Her Background

(Esth. 2: 5-7)

There was a certain Jew in Shushan the palace, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives that had been carried away with Jehoniah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own daughter.

It had been approximately one hundred and twenty years since Kish, the great-grandfather of Mordecai was taken to Babylon; and it would be natural to suppose that Mordecai was probably in middle life, at the time of this lesson. The father of Esther was Abihail (Esth. 2: 15; 9: 29), who apparently, was the son of Shimei, and therefore the uncle of Mordecai. The name of

Esther's mother is not given, and neither do we have any information regarding the deaths of her parents. While nothing directly is said on the subject, it is very probable that Esther was taken into the harem by the king's officers, but it is also very evident that Jehovah overruled that which was done; for it is only on this basis that we can believe that the whole *Book of Esther* is an example of the manner in which God overrules the affairs of nations, and makes all things work for the good of his people.

In concluding a sermon on "Divine Providence," as illustrated by Queen Esther, J. W. McGarvey said, "A few days ago I stood in the great fair at Chicago, before a weaving machine—a wonder. There were coming out beneath the shuttles bands of silk about as wide as my hand, and perhaps a foot long, four or five coming out at one time at different parts of the loom, woven with the most beautiful figures in divers colors. One of them was 'Home, Sweet Home,' the words woven by that machine, and above

the words was the music. There was woven at the top a beautiful cottage, tree in the yard, bee-gums, and children at play, and down below the words and music, a lone man sat, with his face resting on his hand, thinking about that distant home. All coming out of that machine. The shuttles were flying, threads were twisting and dodging about, the machine was rattling, and no human hand was on it. yet there the song, the pictures, the music, were coming out. Did they come out by accident? By an accidental combination of circumstances? I could not, to save my life, tell how it was done, but I saw a pattern hanging up at one side with many holes through it, and I was told that that pattern was ruling the work of that intricate machinery, and leading to that result. I was bound to believe it.

"Now you could make me believe that this beautiful piece of work came out of the loom by accident, and without any man directing and planning it, just as easily as you can make me believe that this chain of circumstances, of facts, bringing about, in accordance with God's faithful promises, the deliverance of his people, was accomplished without him. God was there, my brethren. And just as little as I can believe that all those intricate circumstances in my life and yours, which shape and mould and direct and guide us, which take us when we are crude and wicked men, and mould and shape us and grow us up until we are ripe and ready to be gathered into the eternal harvest—that all this is human, or all blind force, or accident, and that there is no hand of God in it.

"In the story of Joseph, God's hand is pointed out, so that we can see how his providence wrought out his purpose. The story of Esther follows without even the name of God, and we are left, with the training imported by the former story, to find God for ourselves in this. When we have found him, we are prepared to find him in our own lives."

The Manner of Selecting a New Queen

(Esth. 2: 8-11, 16-18)

So it came to pass when the king's

commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with her portions, and the seven maidens who were meet to be given her out of the king's house: and he removed her and her maidens to the best place of the house of the women. Esther had not made known her people nor her kindred; for Mordecai had charged her that she should not make it known. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what would become of her.

The occasion for seeking a new queen for Ahasuerus came about in the following way, namely. The king made a feast in Shushan the palace for all his princes and high officials of the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of his empire, during which "he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, even a hundred and threescore days," or, which is the same thing, six months. And when those days were over, Ahasuerus then gave a seven-day feast for all the people who were present in the city. Both of the feasts just referred to were lavish in every sense of the word, as may be seen by reading the first eight verses of chapter one, of the book from which the lesson text is taken.

Vashti was the queen at the time the king made his feasts, and the record says that she also made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to Ahasuerus; and on the seventh day, "when the heart of the king was merry with wine," he commanded his servants to bring Vashti before him "with the crown royal, to show the peoples and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by the chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him."

While the Scriptures do not specify the actual reason for Vashti's re-

fusal to heed her husband's commandment, it is generally thought by conservative Bible students that such an appearance "was inconsistent with national usage, and as such would have been regarded as a violation of her modesty. Her obedience to it would have degraded her not only in her own estimation, but also in that of the whole community. According to the public sentiment of the time, she could not view the order otherwise than as an insult to her womanhood and a slur upon her honor. Therefore she set it at defiance, and refused 'to come at the king's commandment.'" (William M. Taylor, *Ruth, the Gleaner and Esther, the Queen.*)

The king was stunned by the queen's refusal to make her appearance before the waiting crowd, and he called upon his wise men to advise him regarding his next step. "And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the peoples that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes, when it shall be reported. The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. And this day will the princesses of Persia and Media who have heard of the deed of the queen say the like unto all the king's princes. So will there arise much contempt and wrath."

The Bible, of course, teaches that the husband is the head of the wife, and that her desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her (Gen. 3: 16; Eph. 5: 22-33; 1 Pet. 3: 1-6); but that does not obligate her to do wrong in order to please him (1 Pet. 3: 7; 1 Cor. 7: 15). If the wife's conscience is involved, if a principle is at stake, and if character is affected, the wife should be left free to act upon her own convictions, and no right thinking husband would ask her to do otherwise. The wife, as well as the husband, will have to answer before God for that which is done in the body, whether it be good or evil; and that clearly shows that her higher duty is to the Lord.

After having given his answer to

the king, Memucan then made this proposal: "If it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his kingdom (for it is great), all the wives will give to their husbands honor, both to great and small." This proposal pleased the king and the princes, and it was promptly translated into law.

There are reasons for thinking that Ahasuerus regretted the action which was taken against Vashti, when he recovered from his drunken revelry (Esth. 2: 1); and it was at that time that his advisors suggested that "fair young virgins" be sought throughout the kingdom, and brought into the house of the women; and that from among them the king select a queen to take the place of Vashti. This pleased the king, and it was so ordered. Esther, who apparently lived in the capital city, was among the number "taken" into the king's house. Each maiden, before going in to the king, was given a year's "beauty treatment"; and then, after a night with him, she was returned to the "second house of the women," where she became a concubine, if she did not please the king, that is, if she was not selected as the new queen.

So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the king.

It appears that Esther gained the favor of all the responsible people with whom she came in contact; but regardless of her elaborate surroundings, she did not succumb to

the luxury of anything which would adversely affect her noble character.

"For Such a Time As This"

(Esth. 4: 13-17)

Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether boldest thy peace at this time, then will relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house will perish: and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai, Go, gather all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast in like manner; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

About four years after Esther had been crowned queen of the Persian Empire, her people, the Jews, were involved in a crisis which threatened their very existence. The king had promoted Haman to a place in the kingdom, above all the other princes; and he further commanded all the servants, that were in the king's gate, to bow down before, and do reverence to, Haman. Mordecai was among the number who sat in the king's gate, but he refused to comply with the king's order with respect to his prime minister. Haman, who was so full of egotism and arrogance that he did not notice Mordecai's action himself, had the matter called to his attention by some of the latter's fellow servants, "to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew."

When Haman learned that a Jew was being disrespectful to him, he was full of wrath; but he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone, and set in motion a plan which would destroy every Jew in the entire realm of the king, which would be equivalent to the destruction of every Jew on earth. The entire cost of Haman's projected

scheme of annihilating the Jewish population was estimated to be approximately eighteen million dollars, which Haman proposed to pay, and which would eventually find its way into the king's treasuries. The king readily agreed to Haman's plot, and gave him full authority to carry it out.

Word of the impending doom of the Jews reached the ears of Mordecai in due time, as well of that of the other Jews in the city of Shushan, and they all together united in bitter and prolonged mourning. Mordecai naturally thought of Esther and of her possible influence with the king, in an effort to avert the approaching disaster. News of the crisis was relayed to Esther, but she felt that she could see the king, only if he sent for her; a thing which had not been done for thirty days. It was then that Mordecai began his efforts to convince Esther that hope for the salvation of the Jews rested with her, and that she should undertake the hazardous task of trying to save them. He pointed out to her that an unprecedented opportunity was before her, and that if she did not take hold of it, help would come to the troubled Jews from another source; but that she and her entire father's house would perish, notwithstanding her seemingly secured place in the king's palace.

Esther saw the point, and at once resolved to take hold of the opportunity which was before her, even at the risk of her own life; but not before making due preparation to the best of her ability. There is, of course, a great lesson here for us all; for no responsible person is without an opportunity for performing service to the Lord and his people. If those who are thus placed in such situations will do that which they can to see to it that they are in the Lord's favor, and will then trust in him to overrule that which is beyond their ability to deal with alone, great results are almost certain to accrue.

But Esther was not the only person in a responsible position who was tempted to silence, when she should have spoken: many of the Lord's people today are daily in a similar situation. It may be that a great cause is in danger, as some

one has noted. Its advocates and its opponents are pretty evenly divided; but there is one strong man who, if he would speak, could turn the fortunes of the day; for men believe in his sincerity and disinterestedness, as well as in his knowledge and insight; and the humbler supporters of the cause are waiting, in hope, to see what he will say. His ability, his influence, and his experience, not only qualify but entitle him to speak a great word; but alas! he sits in silence, or makes a speech of unworthy compromise. In short, he lets the golden opportunity pass; and it may be that a great injustice is done, or that the cause of truth and progress is retarded for years, for the want of a word which he could well have spoken.

There are many reasons given for silence, as, for example, diffidence, cynicism, cowardice, etc. One might suppose that plain, uncompromising, speech might alienate his friends, imperil his influence, or injure his reputation; but it may be that in

the providence of God he was brought into the kingdom for such a time as this, and he should, accordingly, do his best. It is true that such a person may face danger if he acts, and he may therefore prefer his happy and free status. But such a person is buried in self-love, and what a dreadful tomb that is! The Lord makes it plain that the denial of one's self is the first condition of discipleship. (Matt. 16: 24.)

Mordecai saw the needs of his people, but he saw more; for he believed in an overruling providence. A little while before this, he might have thought it strange that a Jewess was on the throne of the empire. But now he understands it; for One higher than Ahasuerus had placed the crown upon Esther's head, One who does nothing without a purpose. (Rom. 8: 28; Gen. 45: 5-8; 50: 20.) And so, Esther had come to the kingdom for such a time as this; and she was equal to the occasion! Can the same thing be said of us today?

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 unique facts concerning the *Book of Esther*?

With what peculiar group of books did the Hebrews list it?

Why is the Book of Esther so important?

How did the Jewish people themselves feel about it?

What use did they make of it?

What is its peculiar value to us?

In what way is the Book of Esther different from all other books of the Bible?

What is the literary nature of the book?

What plan did the author follow in writing the Book of Esther?

Who is the heroine of the story and what is known of her?

What were some of her great assets?

How was Esther affected by the great honor which came to her as queen?

The Introduction of Esther and Her Background

How did the Jewish people happen to be in Shushan at the time of this lesson?

Who was the father of Esther and what was her family relationship when we meet her?

Why, apparently, was she taken into the king's house for the women?

What bearing does this have on the doctrine of providence?

What is the basic meaning of the term "providence"?

Why are we certain that the Book of Esther has a bearing on the doctrine of providence?

The Manner of Selecting a New Queen

Why was it necessary for the king to have a new queen?

What is your view of the moral nature of Vashti's refusal to obey the king's orders?

How was the king affected by her refusal to come to him and what was done about it?

Why, apparently, did Memucan give the king the advice which he suggested?

What does the Bible teach regarding the relationship of the wife to her husband?

How did Ahasuerus react to the suggestion of Memucan?

Why was it essential to give the king some further advice about selecting a new queen?

How was the queen actually selected?

What effect did the luxurious surroundings have on Esther? Give reasons for your answer.

"For Such a Time As This"

What great crisis faced the Jews at the time of this section of the lesson text?

Approximately how long had Esther been queen?

What brought on the crisis in question?

Why did Haman want to destroy all the Jews for the action of one man—Mordecai?

How were the Jews affected when they heard of the plan to annihilate them?

Where did Mordecai turn for help?

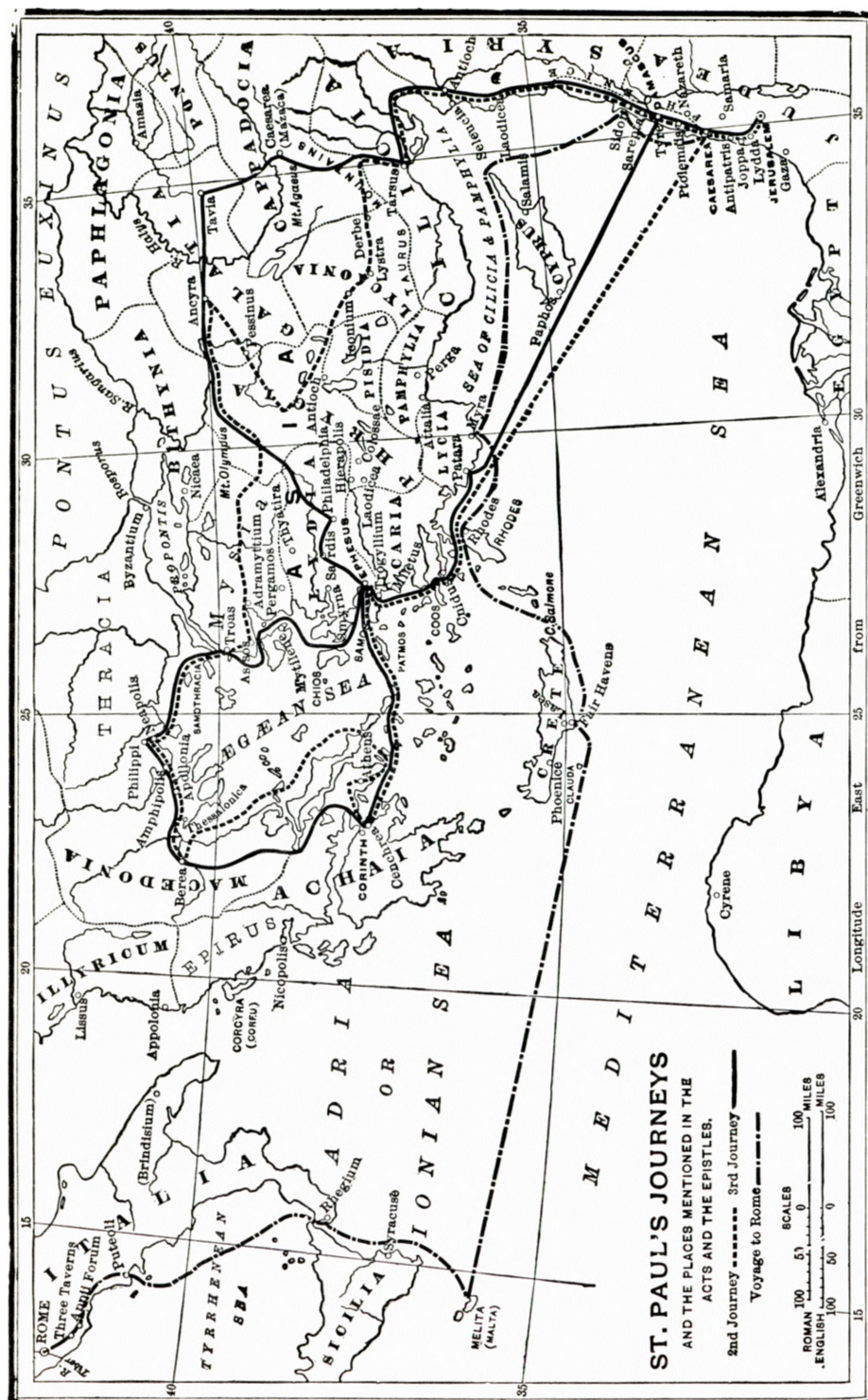
In what way did Esther answer him?

What did he then tell her and what was her reaction then?

Why are many people today tempted to

silence in the face of problems which come before them?

What was Mordecai's attitude regarding the ultimate outcome of the plight of the Jew?



ST. PAUL'S JOURNEYS

AND THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES.

1st Journey ———— 2nd Journey - - - - - 3rd Journey

Voyage to Rome ————

SCALES
 ROMAN 100 50 0 MILES
 ENGLISH 160 80 0 MILES

THIRD QUARTER

THE CORINTHIAN EPISTLES

AIM.—To examine, in detail, Paul's letters to the church in Corinth, and to learn from them lessons of great value to us in living the Christian life today.

Lesson I—July 7, 1968

PAUL AND THE CORINTHIANS

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 1: 1-3, 10-17

1 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Je'-sus Christ through the will of God, and Sos'-the-nes our brother,

2 Unto the church of God which is at Cor'-inth, *even* them that are sanctified in Christ Je'-sus, called *to be* saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ in every place, their *Lord* and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that ye* be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by

them *that are of the, household* of Chlo'-e, that there are contentions among you.

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

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

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

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

16 And I baptized also the household of Steph'-a-nas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Were ye baptized into the name of Paul?"* (1 Cor. 1: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 1: 4-9.

Daily Bible Readings

July 1. M.....	Paul Visits Corinth (Acts 18: 1-4)
July 2. T.....	Paul Preaches in Corinth (Acts 18: 5-11)
July 3. W.....	Conflict in Corinth (Acts 18: 12-17)
July 4. T.....	Factions in Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 10-15)
July 5. F.....	Factions Condemned (1 Cor. 3: 1-7)
July 6. S.....	Christ Prayed for Unity (John 17: 20-26)
July 7. S.....	Blessings of Unity (Psalm 133: 1-3)

TIME.—A.D. 57

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

People today often become discouraged at the very thoughts of trying to establish a church, where conditions are not favorable; but if they will only take a look at Corinth, they will not only see a situation far worse than those which are

usually encountered today; they will also see a living demonstration of that which the gospel can do under very unfavorable conditions. The old city of Corinth, said to have been founded in 1350 B.C., was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C.

After lying in ruins for exactly one hundred years, it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. He made it a Roman colony, and Augustus, later on, made it the capital of Greece (Achaia). The city of Corinth was built on the narrow isthmus which connects the Peloponnesus with the mainland. This isthmus was between the Ægean and Ionian seas; and, as would be expected, the city had two harbors—Cenchreae on the east, for ships to and from Asia, and Lechaum on the west, for ships to and from Italy. The city of Corinth, in Paul's day, was making the most of its strategic commercial position, and was well on the way to becoming the metropolis of Greece, and its richest city.

In addition to Corinth's commercial prosperity and architectural splendor, the city was also noted for its interest in literature and the arts, especially the study of rhetoric and philosophy; but it was notorious for its luxury and moral corruption, particularly for its voluptuous and vicious worship of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, also identified by the Romans as Venus. Corinth therefore became a notorious seat of immorality. The chastity of our time, as some one has observed, does not permit us to speak of the profligacy and licentiousness which characterized that hot-bed of vice, along with its richly endowed temple of Venus which, according to Strabo, supported a thousand priestesses dedicated to immorality; so that even in that dark, heathen age, Corinth had a bad name. It has, in fact, been

called the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire.

When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, in which he recounted the appalling list of vices which characterized the Gentiles of his day, in the latter part of the first chapter (verses 21-32), he had never seen the city of Rome; but he had lived approximately a year and a half in Corinth! Paganism was a hideous reality there; for, as has already been observed, Greek religion implemented and channelized sexual vices, commercializing them under the guise of worship. So vicious were their practices that it was said, "to live like a Corinthian" was a synonym for abandonment to immorality. The population of Corinth, at the time of Paul's stay there, was about four hundred thousand; and was made up chiefly of Romans, Greeks, Jews, and Orientals. It appears from 1 Cor. 12: 2 that the church in Corinth was composed largely of Gentiles, possibly Greeks. All in all, Corinth was a stirring center of contemporary life, the meeting place of the East and the West, where Greeks and Romans, along with some Jews, Orientals, and possibly others, were deeply absorbed in the business and the pleasures of the world. So far as we know, Paul went to Corinth alone; and when we think of how little he impressed his hearers in the marketplace and the Areopagus in Athens, only forty miles away, there is little reason to wonder that he went to Corinth "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." (1 Cor. 2: 3.)

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Apostolic Address and Greeting (1 Cor. 1: 1-3)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God

our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The letter which we are to study during the next few weeks, along with Second Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, was written during a period when Paul's apostleship was called in question by his opponents; and it was doubtless for that reason that he stressed the fact that his call to that office was a divine one. The New English Bible puts it this way:

"From Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ at God's call and by God's will." The italicized words "to be" have no corresponding term in the original. The idea therefore is not that Paul was called *to be* an apostle, but rather that he was a *called* apostle. He neither made himself an apostle, nor was he made so by men. (Cf. Gal. 1: 1.)

We have no further information regarding the identity of Sosthenes; he may or may not have been the Sosthenes of Acts 18: 17. He was with Paul at the time the latter wrote the epistle from which the lesson text for today is taken, and he joined with Paul in the greeting; but other than that, he appears to have had nothing more to do with the epistle.

"The church of God which is at Corinth" included all the Christians who lived in that city, regardless of whether or not they all met at the same place for worship. The term "church" is used in the following senses in the New Testament, namely, (1) *In a general sense.* "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.) "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave unto him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) Thus, the church in this sense embraces all the saved, all *the called out*, in all the world. A physical assembly of the church in this sense is both impossible and unnecessary; for a family is a family, whether all the members are gathered together in one place or not. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 15; Acts 8: 1-4.) Robertson (*Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. III, in loco*) notes that the term "church," which literally means the called out and, consequently, the called together, came to mean an "unassembled assembly." Dr. Robertson (op. cit.) further observes that "words do not remain by the etymology, but travel on with usage."

(2) *With geographical limitations.* "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem." (Acts 8: 1.) "Unto the church of God which

is at Corinth." (1 Cor. 1: 2.) "So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace." (Acts 9: 31.) It is easy to see that the sense of *geographical limitations* is essentially the same, as when applied to the whole body of God's people, that is, it embraces all the saved, all *the called out*, in the territory named. (3) *In a local sense.* "Salute Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus . . . and salute the church that is in their house." (Rom. 16: 3-5.) "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house." (Col. 4: 15.) "Paul . . . to Philemon . . . and to the church in thy house." (Phile. 1, 2.)

The reference to the church in a local sense, as indicated in the passages just quoted, is to a body of people banded together for work and worship, and meeting together in one place. Membership in such congregations is not determined by geographical bounds, but by various circumstances, such as convenience, opportunities for greater services, et cetera. Thus, the church of Christ on Chestnut Street does not necessarily refer to Christians who live on Chestnut Street, but rather to those Christians who regularly meet on that street for worship, even though none of them lives on it.

Just as Paul was "a called apostle," just so were the Corinthian Christians *called saints*, that is, they were people who were set apart and consecrated to the Lord, by virtue of their obedience to the gospel. It is indeed unfortunate that the term "saint" has a significance attached to it today, which is different from its simple Bible meaning. Many people think of the word *saint* only in connection with those who are reputed to be superior in goodness, and those who, after death, have been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

But the term "saint," as used in the New Testament, has reference to those who are "set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his." (Thayer. Cf. John 17: 14-16; 1 Pet. 2: 9; 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.) The word *saint* does not carry with it the idea of sinless perfection, but rather the thought of holy living, and a standard of conduct which will encourage the culture of godlikeness. "Seeing

that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness." (2 Pet. 3: 11; cf. Phil. 4: 21; 1: 27.)

Paul's usual salutation in his letters is that of grace and peace, with the exception of his two letters to Timothy, where he adds mercy. The salutation which we are now considering is not a commonplace greeting, as Robertson points out; but one which bears "the stamp of Paul's experience," old words which had been "deepened and spiritualized."

Exhortation to Unity and the Problem of Division (1 Cor. 1: 10-12)

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

One has only to read the Book of First Corinthians in order to see the wide range of subjects over which the brethren in Corinth were divided. It would be impossible for any one to study the New Testament, either from the standpoint of its letter or its spirit, without reaching the conclusion that God intends for all of his children to be one in Christ. And so, in the text now before us, Paul pled with his brethren in Corinth "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to speak the same thing; and what was true with reference to the Corinthians is also true of people in all ages of the Christian dispensation: for the letter was addressed, not only to the Corinthians, but also to "all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours." This was the tenth time, in as many verses, that Paul had mentioned the name of Christ. He, as some one has suggested, literally tied them to Christ; and he endeavored to get them to change their

thinking, and, consequently, their action.

It is easy for any Bible student to see that one of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament, is the unity of all believers in Christ. Jesus does not teach any conflicting doctrines; and no one can be pleasing to him who either teaches or adheres to such. Division among the followers of Christ is condemned by inspired writers in no uncertain terms; and every one who is responsible for such a state of affairs is nowhere left in doubt as to what his eternal destiny shall be. (Cf. Rom. 16: 17, 13; Gal. 5: 19-21.) It is next to useless to call upon the religious world to unite in Christ, while those who claim to stand upon the Bible alone ignore its teaching regarding the question of unity in Christ. Many of the passages of Scripture which brethren use to condemn sectarian divisions, as that expression is generally understood, were written primarily for the purpose of correcting internal conditions of churches of Christ. It is proper, of course, to try to get all people to unite in Christ; but if the Lord's people want to be effective in that plea, they should first make an honest effort to set their own house in order.

Those who are familiar with the teaching of the New Testament know, of course, that all division is not wrong. Paul made this clear in 1 Cor. 11: 17-19, namely, "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." The New English Bible renders verse 19, parenthetically, in these words: "For dissensions are necessary if only to show which of your members are sound." This does not mean that it is right to create division, but rather that it is sometimes necessary, in order to show the difference between right and wrong. (Cf. 1 John 2: 19.) This is to say that when some of the brethren are doing right, while others are not doing right, the difference between

them will have to come out into the open, so that it can be made manifest as to who are doing the will of the Lord—"For there must be also factions among you, *that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.*"

The dictionary defines a "faction" as a group or clique within a larger group; and that is the sense in which Paul uses the term in 1 Cor. 11: 17-19. The marginal reading for "division" in both 1 Cor. 11: 17-19, and the text now under consideration, is *schisms*, while the marginal note for "factions" is *heresies*. Divisions or schisms result from different attitudes of minds and desires; while factions or heresies are characterized by deliberate choice and determination to maintain the party distinctions. Factions grow out of divisions, and Paul makes it plain in Tit. 3: 10, 11 just how serious such a situation is, namely, "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse [margin, avoid; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned."

The apostle Paul further exhorts, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent." (Rom. 16: 17, 18.) The term "mark" literally means to keep an eye on, or watch carefully, so that they can be avoided. The original word for "divisions" in the passage just quoted is found only one other time in the New Testament—Gal. 5: 20, where its seriousness is apparent. (Cf. 2 Thess 3: 6, 14, 15.) When one considers the fact that practically all of the first four chapters of First Corinthians is devoted to the question of divisions among the Lord's people, he will immediately see that we have a most important lesson before us. The section of the lesson text which we are now considering states the problem of dissensions, while most of the section of the letter already referred to, and, in fact, most of the epistle itself, sets forth the inspired method of dealing with the problem.

There is also another aspect of division set forth in the New Testament which results from righteous conduct, namely, that about which Jesus speaks in Matt. 10: 34-37; "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." No one therefore is justified in rejecting the truth, or even compromising any part of it, in order to have peace with those who are not in sympathy with the Lord's teaching, either because of their outright rejection of it, or because they fail to understand it.

Nothing further is known of Chloe or her household, nor do we know just how the information regarding the divided condition of the church in Corinth was transmitted to Paul. The apostle, however, regarded the information as being authentic, and he wanted the Corinthians to know from whom he received it and how he felt about it. Paul's concern was not simply to have the information regarding the trouble in Corinth; he wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to try to correct the offenders. It appears that some brethren merely want to use that which they hear regarding others as a means of gossip or condemnation. Such people never try to make an effort, in the spirit of Christ, to try to get those who may be guilty of wrongdoing to change their ways for the better.

It is quite possible that the Greek love for faction was manifesting itself in the Corinthian church. The followers of Apollos were probably those who preferred his philosophical and rhetorical preaching, to the simpler and more direct manner in which Paul presented his message. (Cf. Acts 18: 24-28; 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) "Cephas" was the Aramaic for *Peter*, and his name was probably used as the rally-point for the Judaizing Christians, who claimed him as the apostle of the circumcision.

(Cf. Gal. 2: 7-9.) There is no evidence that Apollos and Peter approved the attitude of those who claimed to be their disciples, any more than Paul did. The manner in which the latter speaks of Christ in this connection apparently indicates that those who claimed to follow him, were doing so in a party spirit. (Cf. 2 Cor. 10: 7.) The context of the passage just cited clearly implies that the people to whom Paul referred were not in sympathy with him; and since there is no question about Paul's being of Christ, it must follow that the other were not, that is, not in the true sense of the term. (Cf. Luke 10: 16.)

Hypothetical Questions and a

Direct Answer

(1 Cor. 1: 13-17)

Is Christ divided? was Paxil crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

Instead of the interrogatory form ("Is Christ Divided?"), Vincent points out that some of the best expositors render the expression as an assertion, namely, "*Christ has been divided by your controversies.*" He then goes on to say that this gives a perfectly good and forceful sense, and is favored by the absence of the interrogative particle *me*, which introduces the next clause. The inter-

rogative form does not occur in the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, which is one of the best. The clauses regarding Paul's being crucified for the Corinthians, and his having been baptized into his name, are a part of a separate sentence in Westcott and Hort, and are in the form of questions, being preceded by the particle *me*, which demands an emphatic "No."

But whatever may be the truth regarding the sentence structure just referred to, the whole idea on the part of Paul was to make the Corinthian brethren see how absurd and wicked their party spirit and practices were. This should be an impressive lesson to us today; for it is very obvious that many brethren are following in the footsteps of the Corinthians. Paul did not say that he was thankful that the Christians in Corinth had not been baptized; but, as Moffatt renders the statement, "I am thankful now that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name." Paul's mission was to preach the gospel, a duty which only he could accomplish; but the matter of baptizing those who desired to obey the gospel could be done by others, such as Silas and Timothy. Paul, as an inspired apostle, was commissioned to bear witness to Christ (cf. Acts 22: 15; 26: 16); and that obligation did not necessarily include the work of baptizing people. The statement regarding the baptism of the Corinthian Christians would not, in all probability, have been made, had they not become the followers of men, instead of sincerely devoting themselves to Christ.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What encouragement should Christians today get from Paul's work in establishing the church in Corinth?
Give some of the pertinent facts regarding the city of Corinth?
What is known about the moral condition of the city when Paul first went there?
By whom was the city of Corinth populated?
Who apparently made up the membership of the church there?
Under what circumstances did Paul go to Corinth?

How did he describe his feeling when he began his work there?
How long did he labor in that city?

Apostolic Address and Greeting

Why did Paul emphasize his apostleship as he began most of his letters which have come down to us?
In what way did he describe his apostleship?
What are we to understand regarding the statement, "The church of God which is at Corinth"?
In what senses is the term "church" used in the New Testament?
State and discuss each of these senses.
To whom did Paul address the letter from

which the lesson text for today is taken?
 What kind of "saints" were they?
 What is the fundamental meaning of the term "saint"?
 What did Paul's salutation include?

Exhortation to Unity and the Problem of Division

Name several of the things over which the Corinthian brethren were divided.
 Upon what did he base his plea for their unity?
 What foundation did Paul lay for his exhortation to the Corinthians?
 What only can be the basis for acceptable unity of professed followers of Christ?
 What does the New Testament teach regarding the destiny of those who cause division among the Lord's people?
 Is division among professed followers of Christ always sinful?

What are some of the conditions which make division desirable?
 What is the difference between "division" and a "faction"?
 What does the Lord expect his people to do regarding those who are factious?
 How did Paul get his information regarding the divided condition of the Corinthians?
 What was the nature of their division?

Hypothetical Questions and a Direct Answer

What is the probable thought presented in the first part of this section of the lesson text?
 What was Paul's purpose in addressing himself to the Corinthians as he did?
 In what way does the lesson apply to us?
 For what did Paul say that he was thankful and why was that true?
 What did Christ send Paul to do?

Lesson II—July 14, 1968

THE CROSS AND THE POWER OF GOD

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 1: 18-31

18 For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written,
 I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
 And the discerning of the discerning will I bring to nought.

20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

21 For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.

22 Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gen'-tiles foolishness;

24 But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27 But God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong;

28 And the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, *yea* and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory before God.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Je'-sus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" (1 Cor. 2: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 2: 1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

July 8. M.....God's Power to Save (Rom. 1: 13-17)
 July 9. T.....Preaching in God's Plan (1 Cor. 1: 20-25)
 July 10. W.....Glory in the Cross (Gal. 6: 12-16)

July 11. T.....	Crucified with Christ (Gal. 2: 20-22)
July 12. F.....	Christ a Curse for Us (Gal. 3: 10-14)
July 13. S.....	Imitating Christ (Phil. 2: 1-11)
July 14. S.....	Paul's Preaching in Corinth (1 Cor. 2: 1-16)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

In the closing verse of last week's lesson, Paul said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void." The apostle's principal work was that of preaching the gospel; and his chief concern was that he should see to it that he proclaimed, not only the right message (cf. Gal. 1: 6-9), but that the message be expressed in words which would in no sense detract from its central theme, which was the cross of Christ, or, as the golden text has it, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The death of Christ was absolutely essential to the salvation of the human race, and that truth must be understood and appreciated before any individual is prepared to accept the overtures of the gospel. The apostle Paul was a finished scholar, and his ability to sway the multitudes with the words which were at his command is doubted by no one who is acquainted with his life's history; but he knew that the power to save was not in the wisdom of words, but in the gospel of the cross. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

There is no event in all recorded history which is better attested than the crucifixion of Jesus. His death, burial, and resurrection, which made him the conqueror of death, Hades, and the grave, are the central events in human experience, and the fundamental truths of the gospel. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) One of the great tragedies of our age is the inability of so many, even some professed Christians, to understand the central and basic meaning of the cross. John Milton, the great English poet, realized this great difficulty. He wrote his ode, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity"; but when he tried to write a companion poem to it on the Lord's death, he was unable to complete it. Regarding this effort, he later

wrote: "This subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished." While not professing to explain the full meaning of the cross, there are, nevertheless, some fundamental truths regarding its significance which we can all understand, and which have a practical meaning for us today.

And so, if we are to understand the basic meaning of the cross for our day, we must view it from three major standpoints, (1) we must see the cross as a historic fact in the annals of human experience; (2) we must see the cross as a spiritual symbol of redemptive and creative conflict; and (3) we must see the cross as an eternal challenge in transforming power. One morning after breakfast, so we are told, Elizabeth Barrett Browning left her husband and went up stairs, while a servant cleared the table where he expected to work. "After the servant had left, soft footsteps sounded behind him and his wife's hand on his shoulder kept him from turning so he could see her face. She slipped a manuscript into his pocket, saying, 'Please read this, and if you do not like it, tear it up. Then he fled back up stairs, while Robert Browning sat down to read the noblest love sequence ever written by a woman to the man of her choice.'" Hidden in one of these *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, one may find these lines: "The face of all the world is changed, I think, since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul." The early disciples of Jesus, in a far more significant sense, heard the footsteps of Christ in their souls, and discovered that the face of the world had been changed for them; and, realizing what he had meant to them, they resolutely went out to change the face of the world for others.

The Golden Text

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The first thing which we should observe with reference to Paul's preaching, is that the subject matter which he presented at Corinth, and elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor. 4: 17), was carefully selected from choice and fixed design. This is not to say that Paul himself set the standard by which his preaching was to be measured, but rather that he knew that which the Lord had said about it; and his whole aim was to please his Master. When he said that he was determined to know only Jesus Christ, and him crucified, he did not mean that every sermon which he preached was merely a description of the crucifixion, but that all his teaching and preaching was related to the atonement which was wrought by Christ upon the cross. It has already been noted that the death of Christ was one of the cardinal facts of the gospel, which Paul explained to the Corinthians; and it was the apostle's determined purpose not to discuss anything in his preaching and teaching, which was not directly related to gospel of the cross.

When the New Testament says that Philip, in speaking with the eunuch, "preached unto him Jesus," no one would conclude that he merely said, Jesus, Jesus. In preaching Jesus, Philip would almost certainly tell of the Lord's coming into the world, and of his work and teaching here among men. He would also tell of the salvation

for the human race which Christ made possible, and how that salvation can be obtained by those who desire it. He would tell of the method by which Jesus authorized his disciples to make known to the world that which Jesus has done for mankind, and of his continual interest in their welfare. And, finally, he would tell of the many promises, along with the warnings, which have been made, and which are used as motives for obedience. In short, to preach Jesus is to tell all that Jesus authorized regarding his mission to the earth, and the effort which is being made to save the human race.

If one is willing to read the inspired record in Acts and the Pauline epistles, he will be able to see just what Paul meant to include, when he said that he was "determined not to know anything, among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"; for it is obvious to any thoughtful student that anything which Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and to any one else, as for that matter, was directly related to Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Not every one who tries to preach the gospel today has at his command the language which would mark him as an eloquent and persuasive speaker; but any preacher worthy of the name, and the cause which he represents, can learn to express his thoughts in the words of the New Testament, or in words which are in harmony with, and agreeable to, that which is written.

The Text Explained

The Paradox of the Cross

(1 Cor. 1: 18, 19)

For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And the discerning of the discerning will I bring to nought.

The paradox of the cross is repeated in the next section of the lesson text, namely, "We preach Christ crucified, . . . the power of God." This is the greatest paradox of all ages, but familiarity has dulled our

senses to it. But when we view aright the facts concerning the cross, we must exclaim, "He was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God!" (2 Cor. 13: 4.) Jesus, a short time before his death, said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"; and John adds, "But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." (John 12: 32, 33.) If we look at these words of Jesus from the purely human point of view, it is difficult to imagine a more unlikely prophecy.

When Jesus spoke the words which were just quoted, his ministry, so far as the world was concerned, had ended in failure, his message had fallen on deaf ears, and the source of his mighty works had been ascribed to Beelzebub. What therefore could Jesus do to change unbelief into faith, indifference into devotion, and hatred into love? The Lord's reply was that the transformation would be brought about, not by performing some kind of task, as that expression is generally understood, but by suffering; and history has abundantly confirmed that prediction.

What mental image comes into the mind of the average person, when he tries to visualize the meaning of power? Perhaps a jet-plane speeding through the air at more than six hundred miles per hour? A diesel engine pulling a string of cars at one hundred miles per hour? The authority of an absolute monarch, or the reign of absolute law? The movements of the planets through space, or the forked lightning which is seen in the clouds? These are all symbols of great power, but who, left to himself, would ever think of looking for the symbol of God's omnipotence in the body of a man, dying an ignominious death on a cross? But this so-called man was God's Son; and death had no dominion over him. Peter, in the first gospel sermon in fact, declared that God raised Christ from the dead, "having loosed the pangs of death: *because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*" (Acts 2: 24.) There is not a civilized place on earth where the gospel of the resurrection is unknown.

Yes, there is power in the blood, or, which is the same thing, the gospel of the cross. No one can appreciate the significance of Paul's language in the lesson text for today, until he understands, to some extent, the truth regarding the power of Christ; and that can best be done when one realizes who it was that died on the cross. The following passages of scripture will reveal the victim to us. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without

him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1: 1-4.)

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist [hold together, margin]." (Col. 1: 15-17.) "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev. 1: 12-18.)

The Gospel of the Cross Contrasted with Unman Wisdom (1 Cor. 1: 20-25)

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of

God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The true wisdom and strength of God are seen, not in trying to prevent his enemies from crucifying his Son, but in accomplishing his purpose in making the salvation of the world possible. (Matt. 26: 47-54.) One of the common failures of mankind is their unwillingness to take into consideration the true function of power, namely, the ability to achieve a goal or a purpose. Many people imagine that they are exercising power aright, when they attempt to force their wills upon others. That, however, is not true power, but weakness. With these truths in mind, let us ask again, Why did Jesus allow himself to be put to death? It was to accomplish the purpose of God in making the salvation of the world possible. (2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) There would have been no good achieved whatsoever in destroying those who were determined to put him to death. Christ could have exercised his power in that way, but that would not have resulted in his drawing all men unto himself; that could be accomplished only by love which was willing to suffer.

In his book, *That Immortal Sea* (p. 186f.), Leslie D. Weatherhead tells a story of suffering love, which he had borrowed from an American author. The story is one of a problem boy and his dearly-loved pet, a little rough-haired dog. This boy's parents wanted him to be a good boy, but it seemed that nothing they did for him influenced him in that direction. He was kept in at school, made to stay in his bedroom at home, denied his spending money, not allowed to eat his favorite food, and finally severely beaten. All of that which was done to him was meant to soften him, but it tended only to harden him in his way of disobedience.

Then one summer afternoon an interesting thing happened. The boy was trying to teach his pet to do a certain trick. The afternoon was very hot, the little dog was tired, and the boy was impatient. When the little dog failed to understand what his master wanted him to do, the boy kicked his little pet in the

mouth, and made it bleed. The little dog was puzzled and bewildered, as he looked up at the boy with his big brown eyes; and then very painfully, because the boy had also hurt the dog's shoulder, the little animal struggled onto his hind legs and put up his paws, trying so hard to learn the trick, which his master was trying to teach him. And when the boy came near enough to him, the little dog put out his blood-stained tongue, and tried to lick his master's hand.

When the boy saw the attitude which his little dog was manifesting toward him, he could contain himself no longer; and so, blinded by tears, he ran to his mother, sobbing as if his heart would break. When she asked him what the trouble was, he cried, "I have done an awful thing! I have done an awful thing!" No kind of punishment which he had received had ever affected him in that way; but suffering love had brought him to his senses.

But that which has just been recounted was only the suffering of a little dog. The lesson before us at this time is concerned with the suffering of the Son of God; not only for his friends, but also for his enemies. Paul says, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5: 6-8; John 3: 16.) No one can look at the cross of Christ, and contemplate its meaning, without being profoundly affected by it. One may not respond to the Divine love, which suffered for him, immediately; but he will eventually come to acknowledge it. (Phil. 2:

5-11.) Every one will, if he has not already done so, some day learn the truth which Gamaliel expressed in the long ago, namely, that no one can fight against God and hope to win. (Acts 5: 39.)

When the apostle Paul says, "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the

preaching to save them that believe," the reference was to inspired preaching. No wisdom of the world could ever discover God's plan for saving the fallen race. (1 Cor. 2: 9, 10; Isa. 55: 8, 9.) It is also well to note Paul's use of the terms "Greeks" and "Gentiles." The human race was roughly divided into two principal classes, namely, (1) Jews, and (2) Gentiles. All Jews came from a common stock—the children of Abraham through Jacob; but there were many races among the Gentiles, such as Greeks, Romans, and Orientals. Not all Gentiles therefore were Greeks, but all Greeks were Gentiles. When Paul wrote to the Romans (1: 14), he referred to Greeks and Barbarians, the latter being Gentiles who did not speak the Greek language, nor possess Greek culture.

The Kind of People Who Are Called by the Gospel

(1 Cor. 1: 26-31)

For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Paul, in the previous sections of the lesson text for today, discussed the contrast between divine and worldly wisdom in general; but in this section he becomes more specific, and deals with the church in Corinth itself. It is as if he had said, If any teacher has a philosophy which he wants to expound, then he should go to the schools; but the apostle wanted his brethren in Corinth to know that there is no resemblance

between the church of the Lord and a school of human wisdom. The three privileged groups which he singled out were those who excelled in knowledge, power, and family relationship; and he made it plain that there were not many in either category who were recipients of the gospel call. The few members of the Corinthian church which Paul mentioned in this letter could hardly be called "nobodies"; but it appears that the great majority of the members of the church in that city were slaves and freedmen, people who had not, and could not, lay any claim to being worldly wise, politically powerful, or royally prominent.

When the apostle Paul asked the Corinthian Christians to consider their status before God and men, he said, as *The New English Bible* has it, "My brothers, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called. Few of you are men of wisdom, by any human standard; few are powerful or highly born. Yet, to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly, and to shame what is strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order. And so there is no place for human pride in the presence of God." This is to say that if the gospel had been a grand system of philosophy, God would have addressed it to men of wisdom, power, and of noble birth, rather than to people such as the Corinthian brethren were. This method of approach in dealing with the question of division in the Lord's church has a twofold effect, namely,

(1) it deflates the conceit of those who were puffed up, and (2) it discloses the true mission of the gospel. Worldly wisdom, strength, and family relationship have no place in the Lord's plan for saving the human race.

Jesus spoke of this same situation, while he was here among men; but where he simply gave thanks for that which the Father had done about it, Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, gave a reason for it. The language of Jesus follows: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these

things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." (Matt. 11: 25, 26; cf. Luke 14: 21.) The reason which Paul assigned for this attitude of the Lord is "that no flesh should glory before God." (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10; Tit. 3: 3-7.)

Every conceivable spiritual blessing which God's people need is supplied in Christ (Eph. 1: 3); and there is therefore no need whatsoever for that which worldly relationships can contribute. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God,

and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." The scripture referred to here is in Jeremiah 9: 23, 24, namely, "Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What did the apostle Paul regard as his principal work in the Lord's service?

Why is it essential to preach Christ and him crucified?

What is the basic meaning of the cross and why do many fail to understand it?

From what three standpoints should we endeavor to look upon the cross?

How were the early Christians affected by the cross?

The Golden Text

What does it mean to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified?

What always motivated Paul in his preaching?

What does it mean to preach Jesus?

The Paradox of the Cross

What is meant by the paradox of the cross?

How did Jesus look upon his death upon the cross and how did the world view it?

In what way does the average man visualize the meaning of power?

What was and is the symbol of God's power with reference to salvation?

What is essential in order to appreciate the meaning of the death of Christ on the cross?

The Gospel of the Cross Contrasted with Human Wisdom

In what way are the true wisdom and strength of God seen?

What is the true function of power?

Why did Jesus allow himself to be put to death?

What would have been gained by destroying his enemies?

Why does suffering love have such an effect upon those who rightly behold it?

In what light should we view the suffering love of God?

What is the inevitable end of those who reject the love of the Lord?

What was the only way by which people could come to know God?

What kind of preaching did Paul refer to in the text? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way were "Greeks" related to "Gentiles"?

The Kind of People Who Are Called by the Gospel

In what way is Paul's contrast of divine and human wisdom in this section of the lesson text related to that in the two preceding sections?

How did the apostle go about applying the lesson to the Corinthians themselves?

What appears to have been the general character of the Corinthian Christians?

What twofold effect did Paul's discussion of the divided condition of the Corinthians have on the brethren there?

In what way did Jesus deal with the question of worldly wisdom?

What was Paul's over-all aim in the discussion of the question now before us?

Where must we look for the spiritual blessings which we must have?

Lesson III—July 21, 1968

A CASE OF DISCIPLINE

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 5: 1-13

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

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

3 For I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already as though I were present judged him that hath so wrought this thing.

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

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

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

7 Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye

are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, *even* Christ:

8 Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 4: 1-21.

Daily Bible Readings

July 15. M.....	Some to Be Marked (Rom. 16: 17-20)
July 16. T.....	Withdrawal Commanded (2 Thess. 3: 6-15)
July 17. W.....	A Case of Discipline (1 Cor. 5: 1-13)
July 18. T.....	Separation from the World (2 Cor. 6: 14-17)
July 19. F.....	No Fellowship in Darkness (1 John 1: 5-10)
July 20. S.....	No Fellowship with World (Eph. 5: 1-11)
July 21. S.....	Apostasy Possible (1 Cor. 10: 1-13)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The term "discipline," like the word "temperance," is a broad term, but it is usually employed in a much narrower sense. Temperance is not limited to the question of strong drink, as so many seem to think, but has to do with the broad principle of self-control with reference to all relations of life. And in a similar manner, discipline is not only re-

lated to the question of correction of or punishment for wrongdoing, but is concerned with the whole question of training, growth, and development of the individual, as the effort is made to reach the end in view. One of the clearest examples of the meaning and purpose of discipline, along with the means of accomplishing it, is found in 2 Tim. 3:

16, 17: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

God has a purpose for his people (Rom. 8: 28), and it requires "discipline" in order to help human beings reach that goal. There must be teaching, so that they will know what they must do; reproof, for any wrongs which they have done; correction, that is, get them back into the right way; and instruction so that continuous progress may be made—"instruction which aims at the increase of virtue." (Thayer.) The whole aim of divine discipline is to aid one in becoming that which God wants him to be. Hugh Blair says, "The discipline which corrects the baseness of worldly passions, fortifies the heart with virtuous principles, enlightens the mind with useful knowledge, and furnishes it with enjoyment from within itself, is of more consequence to real felicity, than all the provisions we can make of the goods of fortune."

The writer of Hebrews sets forth the purpose and importance of *corrective* discipline in these words:

"My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom 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 to the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; and make straight paths for

your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed." (Heb. 12: 5-13.)

Hastings points out that few words of Scripture have been laid as a healing balm on wounded hearts oftener than the ones which have just been quoted. They may long go unnoticed on the page, like a lighthouse in calm sunshine; but sooner or later the stormy night will come, and then the bright beam will flash out and be welcomed by those who are in need of guidance. These words of the inspired penman go very deep into the meaning of life; and they tell us how much better God's discipline is than that of the wisest and most devoted parents. They also give the greatest of reasons as to why we should yield more complete and cheerful obedience to God, than we did to our parents who did so much for us. There is therefore a specific design in all the discipline of life. Whatever suffering we are called upon to endure is not without a purpose; the design is both high and large. The purpose of domestic discipline is primarily for a temporal end; but God's design in his is to educate, train, and develop his children into spiritual and immortal perfection—that they may become "partakers of his holiness."

David understood the discipline of Jehovah, and he could therefore sing,

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me;

Thou wilt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies,

And thy right hand will save me.

Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me:

Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, endureth for ever;

Forsake not the works of thine own hands." (Psalm 138: 7, 8.)

The informed child of God will be willing for the Lord to bring to perfection his purpose in his life; and genuine faith cannot associate God with work which is only partially done. He will not forsake the task until it is completed, if we will only submit ourselves to his will. But it will have to be admitted as it respects many of us, that our ideas of his precise purpose, and our concep-

tion, of what his methods should be, are often extremely imperfect. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) This should be enough to convince us that we should never rebel against the disci-

pline which we can know that God has authorized, if we will only read and study his revealed will. Let us, then, keep these facts in mind as we study the lesson now before us.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Lack of Discipline Regarding a

Moral Scandal

The Case Stated

(1 Cor. 5: 1-5)

It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you hath his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

This is the second major sin which Paul deals with in the epistle which we are now studying; the first was that of divisions among the brethren. Although only one man was guilty of the sin of fornication, it is a noticeable fact that Paul holds the entire church responsible. There is a striking similarity between this case and that of Israel, as set forth in Joshua 6 and 7. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4.) Thus, instead of members of the church condemning an offender among them, it would be much better if they would try to determine wherein they themselves might have a responsibility in the matter.

Bible students are not agreed as to whether the man in question had actually married his father's wife, who was evidently his stepmother, or simply had her as his concubine. Vincent offers some critical remarks regarding both views, and then says, "The indications seem to be in favor of marriage. Notwithstanding the facilities for divorce afforded by the Roman law, and the loose morals of the Corinthians, for a man to marry his step-mother was regarded as a scandal." Nothing is said about the father, whether he was dead or divorced. These questions, along with those regarding the specific relation which the man in question sustained to the woman are passed over as being immaterial in comparison with the one fact that the

woman he was living with was "his father's wife." The sin is branded as being without parallel in blackness, which evidently means that Gentile society, as such, did not and would not tolerate such a relationship among them. Barnes says that the offence was known in a few instances among the Gentiles, but it was soundly condemned by classic writers. It was nowhere approved by heathen society, and that made it all the worse for the church to tolerate such a relationship. Cicero, in speaking of the offence, said that "it was an incredible and unheard of crime." No charge was placed against the woman, which indicates that she was not a member of the church.

And so, instead of being humbled by the fact that a revolting sin was known to exist among them, the Corinthian Christians were haughty and proud, and were so occupied with their "theological discussions" that they failed to attach any significance to the criminal conduct which was being continued in their very midst. Such an attitude was disastrous to their influence for good, and resulted in the church's becoming a laughing-stock in the community. This was in sharp contrast with the disciplinary action taken in the early church in Jerusalem against the sinful conduct of Ananias and Sapphira, which at first was not even known to the church itself, to say nothing of the public. (Acts 5: 1, 2.) When the "onlookers" saw that the Lord's people intended to keep the church pure, "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5: 14.)

The "mourning" which should have characterized the church in Corinth was the kind of mourning which is often seen at funerals—the mourning over a brother whose sin

has resulted in his death to righteousness. If members of the church would manifest this attitude toward those among them who have sinned, and would always see to it that any discipline which is administered is preceded by mourning; they would not only keep themselves free from wrongdoing, but would also save many an offender from the evil one. (Cf. Ezra 10: 6; James 4: 9, 10.) If we are going to be benefited by this lesson, we must remember that it does not merely concern the people in Corinth during the early days of the church; but that the principles are also applicable to us today, as may be seen from 1 Cor. 1: 2. While it is hardly probable that anyone today would marry his father's wife, it is a recognized fact that in many churches that there are both men and women who are married to some other people's wives or husbands. This situation demands more than mere criticism or ignoring; it should be dealt with in the light of God's word.

For I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already as though I were present judged him that hath so wrought this thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The passage just quoted shows what the church itself is supposed to do about such sinful matters. This action is authorized by both the spirit of apostolic teaching and the presence of Christ (Matt. 18: 20); and it should be observed that when such action is taken, the church is to be assembled. Some Bible students profess to see in this example the exercise of miraculous power in dealing with offenders, as well as bodily harm afflicted by Satan; but, as McGarvey and Pendleton say, "The argument is very flimsy, and is not sustained by the facts recorded in the case. The meaning is that Paul, having commanded the condemnation of the culprit, will be spiritually present to aid the church in that condemnation. The offender, being excluded from the kingdom of God, is to be thrust back into the

kingdom of Satan, that the sense of his loneliness, shame and lost condition may cause him to repent, and mortify or subdue his flesh, i.e., his lust, after which his spirit, being delivered might be saved." Lipscomb notes that "the exclusion from the fellowship of the saints and the privileges of the house of God is a serious and awful matter. When one has been excluded from the fellowship of the church, Christians should make him feel that he forfeits the esteem and association of all the members of the church, yet he should be warned and admonished as a brother. (2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15.)" To allow a flagrant sinner to remain in the fellowship of the church is nothing short of encouraging him in his sin.

The False Attitude of the Corinthians

(1 Cor. 5: 6-8)

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ: wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

This section of our text appears to be a continuation of the thought introduced in verse 2. Glorying, in and of itself, was not necessarily wrong; but theirs was not good, because of the *subject* of their glorying. In their zeal for worldly wisdom and other matters which appealed to their fleshly pride, they had failed to recognize the fact that a single sin indulged in, or allowed to continue in the church, would act like leaven and soon affect all of the members. This was the reason why the wicked man could not be allowed to remain among them.

In urging the Corinthian brethren to purge out the old leaven, the obvious reference was to the preparation for the Jewish passover. (Ex. 12: 15, 19; 13: 7.) Leaven, as used in this passage, and in this sense elsewhere in the Bible, refers to that which corrupts. Alford renders the question in verse 6 in these words: "Are you not aware that a little

heaven imparts a character to the whole lump?" The term "lump" is a significant term, in that it suggests the oneness of the church, and the consequent danger from evil-doers. (Vincent.)

First Corinthians apparently was written in the spring of the year, probably soon after the time of Jewish passover (1 Cor. 16: 8), and that may account for Paul's reference to the Christians' passover. Not only is Christ our passover; he is our *perpetual* passover; and that means that the feast is a continuous one. And just as literal leaven was not permitted to be used by the Jews in their passover, just so much Christians see to it that that which leaven typifies be removed from them, in the instance now before us, the wicked man. However, Paul does not stop there: he tells all Christians to leave out malice and wickedness, and be characterized instead by sincerity and truth. Bengel notes that "*sincerity* takes care not to admit evil with good; *truth*, not to admit evil instead of good."

Some Previous Instruction Regarding Discipline Clarified

(1 Cor. 5: 9-13)

I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world: but as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator; or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat.

It is clear from the passage just quoted that our *First Corinthians* was not the first letter which Paul had sent to the church in Corinth. There is, of course, no way of knowing, at least by us, just how many letters Paul and the other inspired penmen wrote, which have not come down to us. (Cf. Eph. 3: 3; Col. 4: 116). The letter referred to in the passage now before us is usually spoken of today as Paul's "lost epistle" to the Corinthians; but there are some facts which are available to us which make it possible to think that maybe at least a part of

that so-called lost letter is in our New Testament.

We know, for example, that at least, a part of that letter, that is, Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians, had to do with the question of whether or not Christians might associate with sinful people in the world. The Corinthian brethren misunderstood Paul's meaning, and interpreted his message as forbidding Christians to have any association with unconverted sinners; but in verse 11 of the passage now under consideration, Paul carefully explained to them just what he did mean. Turning now to 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1, we are faced with the remarkable fact that here is a passage on exactly the same subject referred to in 1 Cor. 5: 9-11, and capable of precisely the same misinterpretation, that is, have no association with any sinners in the world. (Read 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1.)

Furthermore, it is quite noticeable that the thought which is broken off in 2 Cor. 6: 13 is picked up and continued in 2 Cor. 7: 2. This can be plainly seen when the two verses just mentioned are read together, with no break between them. Beginning with the first of the paragraph: "Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own affection. Now for a recompense in like kind (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged. . . . Open your hearts to us: we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man. I say it not to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die together and live together. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying on your behalf: I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our afflictions." (2 Cor. 6: 11; 7: 4.)

It is altogether possible therefore that 2 Cor. 6: 14; 7: 1 is at least a fragment of Paul's so-called "lost letter" to the Corinthians, which is referred to in 1 Cor. 5: 9-11; but if this is true, how did it come to be preserved in Second Corinthians? That is an interesting question, and it will be considered later. But, for the time being, it is only necessary to say that 2 Cor. 6: 14;

7: 1 is on an entirely different subject from that which is discussed in 2 Cor. 6: 11; 7: 4.

For what have I to do with judging them that are without? Do not *ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.* This is further evidence that Paul, in his previous letter, did not have reference to sinful people outside the church. Alford thinks that these remarks

about judging form a transition-point to the subject which is discussed in the beginning of the next chapter. But having finished his explanation regarding the prohibition of his former epistle, and with it the question of the fornicator among them, he gives them, before passing on to chapter 6, a summary command regarding the latter; and the same, of course, is true of any other wrongdoers who bring reproach upon the church.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons

Introduction

In what sense is the term "discipline" used in this lesson?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to the subject?

Why is discipline necessary in the Lord's dealings with his people?

How do we know that God has a purpose for his people?

What do the Scriptures say regarding "corrective discipline"?

What is the status of a person who is without discipline?

What is the general attitude of thoughtful people who look back upon their discipline?

Why should frequent lessons be taught on the general subject of discipline?

Why is man incapable of knowing just what he should receive in this respect?

What, then, should be our attitude toward the discipline of the Lord?

Why do so many people rebel again properly constituted discipline?

How, alone, can the Lord's people overcome such an attitude?

Lack of Discipline Regarding a Moral Scandal

The Case Stated

What place does the question now before us occupy in the over-all letter we are studying?

How widespread was the responsibility involved in the sin in question?

Why was this true?

What was probably the status of the man who had committed the sin?

Why was the church as a whole relatively unconcerned with reference to the wrongdoing?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to such an attitude?

What did Paul say to them regarding it?

What did he tell the brethren to do about the sinful man?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to withdrawing fellowship from sinful brethren?

The False Attitude of the Corinthians

Why was the glorying of the Corinthians not good?

Why did Paul mean by purging out the old leaven and why was the term probably used?

What kind of "unleavened bread" should the Lord's people use and not use?

What is implied by "sincerity" and "truth," as they respect the subject now before us?

Some Previous Instruction Regarding Discipline Clarified

What place in the correspondence of Paul with the Corinthians does this letter occupy?

What possible lesson should we learn from this?

What is possibly true of Paul's so-called "lost letter"?

Why had the Corinthian brethren misunderstood Paul's former letter to them?

Why should people today make an honest effort to make sure that they do know that which a particular passage of scripture says?

What distinction does the apostle Paul make regarding the attitude of the Lord's people toward sinful people inside and outside the body of Christ?

In what sense do the Lord's people "judge" them that are within?

What summary command did Paul give the Corinthians regarding the sinful man among them?

Lesson IV—July 28, 1968

CORRUPTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 11: 20-34

20 When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper:

21 For in your eating each one taketh before *other* his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not.

23 For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Je'-sus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread;

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

30 For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.

31 But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another.

34 If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This do in remembrance of me."* (Luke 22: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 11: 17-19.

Daily Bible Readings

July 22. M.....	The Lord's Supper Instituted (Matt. 26: 26-30)
July 23. T.....	Luke's Account of the Supper (Luke 22: 14-30)
July 24. W.....	Mark's Account of the Supper (Mark 14: 17-26)
July 25. T.....	Paul's Account of the Supper (1 Cor. 11: 23-29)
July 26. F.....	Old Testament Feasts (Ex. 12: 1-11)
July 27. S.....	Christ Our Passover (1 Cor. 5: 1-13)
July 28. S.....	Apostolic Worship (Acts 2: 42; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; Acts 20: 7)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Jesus, during the last passover supper which he ate with his disciples, instituted the Lord's supper; and, in doing so, he distinctly told his disciples just how he wanted them to remember him. His own death for the sins of the world was only a matter of days away; and it

was that death which would have such a vital place in the thoughts of his disciples, if they were to be pleasing to him. But Jesus did not, and does not, want his death to be remembered as the tragic end of a noble career, which might be hal-
lowed by tears, such as are shed

over a martyr's ashes; nor even as the crowning proof of his love for them: but rather as the death which was necessary for the remission of the sins of the world. It is only when Christians realize that the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross was the only possible way of redemption from sin, that the Lord's supper can have to them the meaning which Christ intended that it should have.

One has only to read the history of the Bible in order to see that people in all ages of the world have sought to add something to that which the Lord specifies, in an effort to show their devotion to him; and it was for that reason that God frequently forbade any additions to that which he said and did. The Lord's supper, as has already been noted, was instituted during the passover feast; and inasmuch as there were *two* suppers then, the passover supper and the Lord's supper, some early Christians conceived the idea of having a "love feast" in connection with the celebration of the Lord's supper. This extra feast is specifically referred to by Jude (verse 12), and very probably by Peter (2 Pet. 2: 13), and by Paul in the lesson text for today's lesson (1 Cor. 11: 20-22).

The origin of the "love feast" (*agape*, Greek) is not definitely known; but its evident purpose was to promote a fuller sense of brotherhood among the early followers of Christ. The *love feast* and the Lord's supper were two entirely different institutions, the one of human, and the other of divine ori-

gin. *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* says that the correct account of the origin of the love feast is that which was given by Chrysostom, who says that "after the early community of goods had ceased, the richer members brought to the church contributions of food and drink, of which, after the conclusion of the services and the celebration of the Eucharist [an improper designation for the Lord's supper], all partook together, by this means helping to promote the principle of love among Christians." (Vol. 11, p. 1688.)

Bible students, however, are not agreed as to the time of the love feast, in relation to the Lord's supper. Some think that it came before, and some after; but there is fairly general agreement as to its purpose, namely, that of "an external expression of the sense of brotherhood which was characteristic of the primitive Christian churches, and they were no doubt suggested by similar institutions, which seem to have been common among both Jews and Gentiles. It is also probable that the recollection of the Last Supper of our Lord with his disciples was an additional cause of the holding of these meals." (*Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Hastings, Vol. I, p. 717.) The importance of the question of the early "love feasts" to us lies in the relationship which it apparently had with the Lord's supper, in the church in Corinth; and, as we shall see further on in this study, it became the occasion for some needed teaching regarding Christian conduct.

The Golden Text

"This do in remembrance of me."
The words just quoted, taken from Luke's account of the institution of the Lord's supper, are identical with those used by Paul in the lesson

text for today's lesson; and inasmuch as this is the case, we shall consider them in their place in the text now before us.

The Text Explained

Some Disqualifying Disorders in Connection with the Worship

(1 Cor. 11: 20-22)

When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What,

have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not.

As the apostle Paul began the discussion of the two questions, which are contained in the chapter from

which the lesson text for today is taken, he said, "Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you;" but when he reminded them of the shameful conditions which prevailed in the church during the time of their Lord's day worship, he told them plainly that he could not praise them in that. He opened the discussion of this portion of the lesson text for today with these words: "But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11: 17-19.)

It is very probable, as has already been suggested, that this unsatisfactory and, consequently, unacceptable situation grew out of an abuse of the love feast, which was brought about by the factious attitude of some of the Corinthian brethren. It is fair to assume from the remark made by Jude, already referred to in this lesson, that the love feast was a harmless practice, in and of itself, since neither Jude, Peter, nor Paul offered any criticism of the practice; but when it became a vital and manifesting factor of the spiritual condition of the participating brethren, because of its abuse, it was summarily condemned by apostolic authority. It should also be observed that the abuse of the love feast was not where the trouble started: it began in their unbrotherly attitude toward others in the church. The "Lord's supper" was one thing, while their "own supper" was something else. There is no evidence whatsoever to the effect that they had changed the *Lord's supper* into a feast for their physical enjoyment. They had *two suppers* when they met for worship; and when brethren are controlled by such a spirit as that which characterized the Corinthian brethren, almost anything is likely to happen.

Some brethren, even today, have mistakenly thought that the passage now under consideration condemns the eating of food in the church

building; but this is due to the fact that they fail to make a distinction between the church and the building in which the church meets. If it were wrong to eat and drink in a church building, then the room in a private home, in which a congregation frequently assembles for worship, could not be used as a dining room, or even a place where light refreshments might be served. Paul did not condemn the Corinthian Christians merely for eating in the place of the assembly, but rather for their unchristian conduct in eating and drinking to excess, and ignoring their needy brethren, while assembled for worship. Any extra activities, which adversely affect the worshippers, along with all unchristian attitudes, which are brought into the assembly of the saints who have met for worship, are always out of place and contrary to the will of God.

It is not wrong to serve food and drink "on the ground," that is, on the premises of the church, either before or after the hour of worship; and it would not be out of place to partake of the food and drink inside the building, if conditions made it more desirable, provided the spirit of Christ prevails. But when those who have plenty bring their food and drink to the place of the public assembly, and partake of it privately in a public place; and not only that, but eat and drink to excess to the embarrassment of those who do not have a sufficiency, the spirit which prompts such conduct is so foreign to the will of God, as to make it impossible to eat the Lord's supper under such conditions. They can, of course, go through the form of eating the supper; but the language of the inspired apostle Paul makes it certain that the Lord does not recognize the practice as being in obedience to him. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23.)

When Paul asked the Corinthian offenders if they did not have houses, that is, private homes, in which eat and drink, he did not mean to imply that it was proper to eat and drink to excess there, and to ignore the poorer brethren. But what he is apparently saying is that it is much better for them to do their eating and drinking at home, than to manifest such a spirit as they were disclosing in the place of

public worship. Such conduct pours scorn on the church, and humiliates the humbler and poorer brethren; and it is exceedingly unfortunate that the same spirit is frequently seen today. There are members of the church with plenty who apparently have little or no concern for the needs of others, or for the glory of the church; and they frequently do nothing to conceal their attitude regarding those who have a right to expect better things of them. (Cf. 1 John 5: 17a.) Such brethren seemingly fail to see the real reason which prevented some of the Corinthian brethren from eating the Lord's supper, namely, their own unchristian attitude, which was manifested in their factious spirit and ungodly conduct. (Cf. John 4: 24.) People must have spiritual communion with God, before they can worship him in spirit; and they must be guided by the truth, before they can worship him in truth. It should be obvious, even to the superficial, that brethren in a "fuss" cannot worship God acceptably.

The Origin and Purpose of the Lord's Supper

(1 Cor. 11; 23-26)

For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

Paul's evident purpose in setting forth the divine origin of the Lord's supper was to condemn the scandalous behaviour of the Corinthian brethren, and to urge them to get themselves right with God. Professed Christians who have any love for the Lord, and any appreciation for that which he did in making their salvation possible, along with any respect for themselves, will not be guilty of that which humiliates their brethren, disgraces the church in the eyes of others, and shows

contempt for the Lord, when they meet for worship; and those who are guilty of such conduct should be made to see, if possible, that they cannot eat the Lord's supper under such circumstances.

That which has just been said shows what is meant by improper observance of the Lord's supper; or, to say the same thing in another way, no one can eat the Lord's supper in an acceptable manner, while engaging in such sinful practices: right and wrong cannot be mixed in such a fashion. (Cf. James 2: 10.) It is often the case that brethren criticize denominational people for their unscriptural attitude with reference to the Lord's supper, and apparently feel that such is the extent of the improper observance of the communion service. Such attitudes and practices, of course, are not acceptable to the Lord; but that is not what this lesson is designed to set forth. The Corinthian brethren were the Lord's people; and it was their own conduct which made it impossible for them to eat the Lord's supper. And we should, in the light of Paul's teaching here, be made to realize that when Christians come to the place of worship on the Lord's day, with the wrong attitude toward the Lord and their brethren, that they, too, are in a position which will prevent their pleasing the Lord whom they profess to serve. (Cf. Matt. 5: 23-26.)

Paul's position as the apostle to the Gentiles, often led to his being criticized by his brethren, and made it necessary for him to assert the independence of his relationship to Christ. When he wrote the letter to the churches of Galatia, he said, "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 11, 12.) With this statement of truth in mind, it appears certain that Paul was claiming direct revelation from Christ regarding the Lord's supper; all of which would make his words to the Corinthians more impressive. *The Expositor's Greek Testament* notes that the allusion to "the night in which he was betrayed" (literally, *while the betrayal went on*), is

no mere note of time. It shows the fidelity of Jesus in the covenant (verse 25) thus made with his people, and enhances the holy pathos of the recollection—behind the Saviour lurks the traitor. It also incidentally shows how detailed and matter-of-fact the account is which Paul gave his converts in Corinth.

In saying, "This do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," Paul did not mean to imply that there was no definite time for the observance of the Lord's supper. The apostle's purpose in discussing the question did not involve the time element. The Corinthian brethren knew *when* they were expected to meet for that purpose; but they needed some definite teaching regarding the *manner* in which they should celebrate the sacred feast.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. The passage just quoted sets forth one of the four principal New Testament reasons which are assigned for observing the Lord's supper, namely, (1) We learn from verses 24, 25 that it is a *commemorative institution*. (2) The verse now under consideration, verse 26, teaches us that it is also *declarative*. (3) A third purpose is set forth in 1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17, namely, *communion*. (4) The fourth purpose for which the supper was instituted is implied in John 6: 53-55. It is true that the passage just cited does not refer directly to the Lord's supper, but any one who does that which Jesus teaches in it will partake of the quality of his life—his flesh and his blood (which includes all of his commandments regarding the Lord's supper and everything else); and that will furnish to the obedient one *spiritual nourishment*.

The Consequences of Improper Observance of the Supper

(1 Cor. 11: 27-34)

Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if

he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.

There are some brethren who feel, when they read this section of the lesson text, that they are not worthy to eat the supper of the Lord; and they have, because of that viewpoint, failed to do that which is directly commanded by divine inspiration. The reference is not to an "unworthy person," but to an "unworthy manner." And in order for anyone to make sure that he is obeying the Lord in this respect, he is exhorted to "prove himself," that is, put himself to the test. (Cf. 2 Cor. 13: 5; 1 Thess. 5: 21; Eph. 5: 10; 1 John 4: 1, where the same original word is found.) Thus, instead of coming to the Lord's table as some of the Corinthian brethren did (1 Cor. 11: 17-22), or like many brethren often do today, that is, professed Christians who do not possess the proper attitude toward the Lord and some of their brethren, the Lord's people must "discern" the body, or, which is the same thing, *judge correctly*, that is, *discriminate* (see marginal note), and thereby make certain that what they are doing differs from all other eating and drinking, in that it is done unto the Lord. Any one who attempts to eat the Lord's supper without this due consideration is guilty of a gross sin, for which he will be duly punished, if the proper steps are not taken for its forgiveness. Professed followers of Christ must come to the table of the Lord, feeling that they are in his presence (cf. Matt. 18: 20), and with a spirit of humility and reverence.

The term "cup," in verse 27, does not refer to the container, but rather to its contents. This is made certain by the language of the passage itself, namely, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner,

shall be guilty of the *body* [bread] and the *blood* [cup] of the Lord." Thus, in the comparison, bread—the body, and cup—the blood. Therefore, when Paul exhorts the Lord's people to "drink the cup" (verse 26), he does not mean that they are to drink the literal cup, but rather its contents, that is, that which represents the Lord's blood.

Alford calls verse 30 ("For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep") the experimental proof of the assertion that he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment unto himself, if he does not discern the body. Some hold that the reference was to physical diseases and death; but that seems hardly probable, since, as Lipscomb notes, spiritual neglect must bring spiritual penalties. The failure of the Corinthian Christians to restrain themselves, and condition themselves spiritually, had apparently resulted in their spiritual indifference and neglect, and had caused some of them to die spiritually.

The view just stated seems to be the correct one, especially after reading verse 31, which says that if we correctly discern ourselves, that is, try or test ourselves, we will not be condemned of the Lord. The apostle continues: "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (Cf. Heb. 12: 5-13.) Christian people should always count it a great blessing when they are corrected with reference to their conduct, which is not pleasing to the Lord.

While most Bible students regard the coming together to eat (verse 33) as referring to eating the Lord's supper, and that could, of course, be true; but it is only fair to say that that is not the view of all respected commentators. If the reference is to the Lord's supper, then the waiting one for another does not mean that if some of the brethren are late, the ones who are present at the place of meeting, and ready to eat the supper, should postpone the communion service until the late comers arrive; for in that case they might have to wait all the week! But when we consider the fact that the disturbance in the church in Corinth was

not over the Lord's supper, as such; but rather over that which was happening at the love feast, which made it impossible to eat the Lord's supper, since they were wholly unfit to assemble around the Lord's table, it appears quite probable that Paul was referring to the love feast in the verse now under consideration.

It has already been pointed out that, judging from Jude's reference to the love feast, there does not seem to be any condemnation of the practice itself, since the feast was intended to promote Christian benevolence and fellowship; but when it was perverted, as it was in the Corinthian church, the result was that the worship of the church which followed, including the eating of the Lord's supper, was rendered null and void. No group can worship God acceptably under such conditions; and this is the lesson which we need to learn.

An analysis of the whole context now before us is something like this: (1) the shameful disorders of the Corinthian brethren at the love feast, probably prior to the time for eating the Lord's supper, verses 17-22; (2) the solemn origin, nature, and purpose of the Lord's supper make it impossible for such abusers of Christian fellowship to partake of it acceptable in the Lord's sight, verses 23-32; (3) therefore, when assembling for the love feast, the Lord's people must not act as the Corinthians did in verse 21, but wait one for another, so that all may enjoy the fellowship together, and be spiritually fit to eat the Lord's supper as the body of Christ. Alford notes that the love feasts were not meals to satisfy bodily appetites, but for higher and holier purposes: therefore, let the hungry take off the edge of his hunger at home. (See verse 22; cf. Bloomfield, Meyer, et al, *in loco*.) (4) Thus, according to Paul's reasoning, if the Corinthian brethren would get themselves in a better spiritual condition, then their meetings would not be subject to condemnation; and the apostle would give them further instruction when he next visited them. (Verses 33, 34.) That which destroys Christian fellowship prevents an acceptable eating of the Lord's supper.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?
 Reread the golden text.
 Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the nature of the Lord's supper and why did Jesus ordain it?
 What have people in all ages of the world sought to do to show their devotion to God?
 What did the early Christians apparently have in connection with their worship?
 What appears to have been the nature and purpose of the love feast?

Some Disqualifying Disorders in Connection with the Worship

Under what circumstances did Paul speak of praising the Corinthian brethren?
 About what did he say that he could not praise them?
 What appears to have been the trouble with the brethren in Corinth?
 What is known of the "love feast" during the early days of the church?
 In what way were the Corinthians abusing that practice?
 Why do some people think it wrong to eat and drink in a church building?
 What appears to be wrong with their reasoning?
 What idea was Paul trying to make when he asked the Corinthians offenders if they did not have houses to eat and drink in?
 Why was it not possible for some of the Corinthian brethren to eat the Lord's supper?

What lesson is there in this for us in this age of the world?

The Origin and Purpose of the Lord's Supper

Why did Paul apparently set forth the facts regarding the Lord's supper at the time of this lesson?
 How did he come into possession of this information?
 What type of instruction did the Corinthians need with reference to the Lord's supper?
 What are the four basic purposes of the supper?

The Consequences of Improper Observance of the Supper

Why do some brethren feel that they are not worthy to eat the supper of the Lord?
 What is wrong with their reasoning regarding this question?
 What are all Christians taught to do before they eat the Lord's supper?
 How may one examine himself before eating?
 Why is this so essential?
 What is the meaning of drink the "cup"? Give reasons for your answer.
 What kind of action followed the failure of the Corinthians to examine themselves?
 What kind of "eating" is referred to in verse 33? Give reasons for your answer.
 Give an analysis of the immediate context of the lesson text for today.

Lesson V—August 4, 1968

THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 12: 12-27

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.

13 For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the mem-

bers each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now they are many members, but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary:

23 And those *parts* of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness;

24 Whereas our comely *parts* have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that *part* which lacked;

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suf-

fereth, all the members suffer with it; or *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And he is the head of the body, the church.*” (Col. 1: 18.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 12: 1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

July 29. M.....	One Body, the Church (Eph. 4: 1-6)
July 30. T.....	Christ's Body, the Church (Eph. 1: 19-23)
July 31. W.....	Church, Christ's Bride (Eph. 5: 25-33)
August 1. T.....	For His Body's Sake, the Church (Col. 1: 24-29)
August 2. F.....	One Body, Many Members (1 Cor. 12: 12-20)
August 3. S.....	Christ's Church (Matt. 16: 1-18; Rom. 1: 16)
August 4. S.....	Church in God's Plan (Eph. 3: 1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Paul's immediate aim in that portion of his letter from which our lesson text for today is taken was to set forth the organic unity of the church; and he accomplished his purpose, and illustrated his point, by comparing the church to the human body. If any one will keep in mind the fact that the human body, though having many parts, is still only one body, and that it cannot function properly without the normal use of its several parts, it will be much easier for him to understand the nature and purpose of the church. No thoughtful person would contend that the various members of the human body are "separate bodies," all of which are integral parts of the whole; but that is the ridiculous position in which one places himself, when he tries to justify the idea that all the denominational bodies of Christendom are in reality parts of the church of the Lord.

When the New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ, the reference is not to the literal and personal body of the Lord, that is, his fleshly body; but rather to the "body of people" over which he rules as head. After speaking of the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, Paul says, "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) The

literal meaning of the original word for "church" is the *called out*; and since the people who compose the church are those who were called out of the world by the gospel which Christ authorized to be preached (Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Thess. 2: 13, 14), it follows that that group of people and the body of Christ are one and the same. (Cf. Acts 2: 41, 47.)

In speaking of the church as the body of Christ (Eph. 1: 22, 23), Paul says that this body is "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," that is, the body (church) is in some sense the "fulness" of Christ. Bible students are not agreed as to whether the original term for "fulness" (*pleroma*) should be regarded as being active or passive. One of the meanings of *pleroma*, according to Arndt-Gingrich, is "that which makes something full or complete, supplement, complement," and they recognize the possibility that in its figurative sense the church, as the body, is the *complement* of Christ, who is the head. They also call attention to the fact that this was also the view of Chrysostom. Weymouth renders the passage under consideration in these words, "God put all things under his feet, and has appointed him universal and supreme head of the church, which is his body, the completeness of him who everywhere fills the universe with himself."

If Weymouth's translation is cor-

rect, and the context appears to require it, then the idea is that the church complements or makes complete him who wills the entire universe. This is perhaps the greatest tribute which could be paid to the church—something which is so essential to Christ, that he could not be complete without it! While Arndt-Gingrich, the Expositor's Greek Testament, and other scholars lean toward the idea that the term for "fulness" should be regarded as passive, the Expositor's Greek Testament does concede that if the term is to be regarded as active the "idea is that the church is that which makes Christ himself complete. A head, however perfect in itself, if it is without members, is something incomplete. So Christ, who is the head of the church, requires the church to make his completeness, just as the church which is his body requires him as the head to make a complete and living thing."

We know, of course, from other passages of scripture that the Divine Presence fills the church (cf. Eph. 3: 16-19), but that does not mean that the church also is not the complement of Christ. Any one who is familiar with the teaching of the New Testament knows that Christ does not do his work of redemption and sanctification personally, but rather

through the church. (Eph. 3: 20, 21.) It is the purpose of the church to reveal Christ to the world, and to continue his work which he began while he was himself on the earth. It is, indeed, a truth worthy of great emphasis that the gospel and the work of the church are but extensions of the personal ministry of Christ: for it is through these channels that the glorious work continues. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.)

To speak of the church as the body of Christ, is a wonderful figure, and the practical meaning is that what the members of his body were to him during the day of his flesh, so the church is to him now. How could Christ have shown men what God is like while he was among them, except by means of his body and its various members and faculties? And how could he have gone about doing good and proving his love to the uttermost, without his body? It is a great and solemn thought that now, after the Lord has returned to his Father, the church, as his body, has entrusted to it a work which, apart from it, he lacks the means to accomplish. The church is his co-worker, and he has honored her by sharing with her the task of achieving the work which he came to do.

The Golden Text

"And he is the head of the body, the church." Attention has often been called to the fact that Colossians and Ephesians were not only written at the same time, but on the same general theme. In Colossians Paul placed the emphasis upon the preeminence of Christ as the head of all things, especially the church; and in doing so he set forth the grandest and fullest conception which is known to us. But in Ephesians he shifted the emphasis some-

what and centered the attention of his readers upon the place and purpose of the church, as the body of Christ, as the medium through which the eternal purpose of God is made known (Eph. 3: 10), and through which he is to receive glory from his redeemed creatures (Eph. 3: 20, 21). If all the members of the body of Christ would only keep continuously in mind the fact that Christ is the head of the church, and would abide by that truth, what a difference it would make!

The Text Explained

The Organic Unity of the Body

(1 Cor. 12: 12, 13)

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks,

whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

In spite of the organic union of the Roman Empire of Paul's day, there were many divisions among the people, such as those which existed between Jew and Gentile, master and slave, rich and poor, the

learned and the unlearned. The attitudes which grew out of these relationships produced barriers among the people which were almost insurmountable. The entire world was seamed and scarred by divisions which separated man from man.

It was into this kind of a situation that the gospel came with its appeal to men. This message was not limited to a favored few, but was for all men, regardless of their station or relationship in life. (Cf. John 12: 32; Mark 16: 15, 16.) But the gospel did not call men to continue in their divisions; they were to be one in Christ. (Col. 3: 9b-15.) All of their former enmities and unholy attitudes toward one another were to be left behind when they came into Christ. (Cf. Isa. 11: 6-9.) It was to people with this kind of a background that Paul addressed the exhortation of the text now under consideration; and when we consider the fact that the unity which is here alluded to is the unity which the Spirit himself brought about (Eph. 4: 3), the importance of the lesson will at once become apparent.

The first thing which Paul does in the passage now before us is to show the unity of the human body, with its various members; and then affirms that just so it is with Christ and the members of his body. This is the kind of unity which the Spirit brings about when people obey the gospel; and they are under direct compulsion to make every effort to maintain it. (Read again Eph. 4:

3.) The apostle affirms in verse 13 of the text now before us that it was through the agency of the Spirit that we were "all baptized into one body," regardless of our former relationships in life. This baptism, of course, is water baptism, the baptism of the great commission; and it is administered by the Lord's people as the Spirit directs. All classes therefore reach a spiritual equality before God in this body, which is the church. (Gal. 3: 26-28.)

The unity is further confirmed and sealed by the fact that those baptized into Christ are "all made to drink of one Spirit." The original word from which we have "drink" is *potizo*, and its meaning is to give or furnish something to drink. It came to mean to water, to irrigate

and it is the word which Paul used when he said, "I planted, Apollos watered." (1 Cor. 3: 6-8.) In its metaphorical sense, as used in the passage now before us, the word means, according to Thayer, Arndt-Gingrich, et al, to imbue, saturate. (Cf. Isa. 29: 10.) Moffatt has, "we have all been imbued with one Spirit"; Goodspeed, "and we have all been saturated with one Spirit"; The Expositor's Greek Testament, "we were drenched" in one Spirit.

The Church Is a Body with Many Members

(1 Cor. 12: 14-20)

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body.

Verse 14—"For the body is not one member, but many"—may well be called the thesis of this section of our lesson text; and the verses which follow are meant to illustrate it. And just as the physical body is one, with many members; so is the church. We must always expect a variety of members in the church, and we must always remember that no child of God, however insignificant he may be in the sight of his brethren, is useless in the service of the Lord. This is a lesson that even many of the leaders in the various congregations have apparently failed to learn, to say nothing of the average members who go to make up those groups. When Jesus spoke the parable of the talents, he made it very plain that every individual possesses something which makes him responsible in the sight of God. No member of the church therefore should regard himself as being of no account in the service of the Lord; and that is the way every other

member should feel toward the entire brotherhood.

It is often the case in the average congregation that some "weaker" members are wont to belittle themselves in the presence of their more gifted brethren; and verses 15 and 16 show the folly of such an attitude. The first section of the lesson text shows that all who are in the church, regardless of their station, are organically united with the entire body. We were "all baptized into one body, . . . and were all made to drink of one Spirit." There is therefore no one who is a member of the body, who is without responsibility toward the others and toward the Lord. Just because someone feels that his inferior ability excludes him from a vital place in the body, that feeling does not make it so, any more than the feeling that one is a child of God makes a man who has never obeyed the gospel a Christian. Feelings, regardless of by whom they may be manifested, are never the standard of acceptance in God's sight. His word, and his word only will determine whether or not one is pleasing to the Lord. (John 12: 48-50.)

It should be observed that Paul, in discussing the passage now under consideration, associates the members of "action" (the foot and the hand), and the members of "sensation" (the ear and the eye), and then represents each as complaining against the other of his own class; and this was doubtless true because men are more prone to be envious and to disparage themselves with reference to those who have superior gifts which are similar to their own. It is the foot therefore, and not the eye or the ear, which envied the hand. Every member of the body of Christ therefore should recognize himself for what he is, and should do his best to be pleasing to the Lord, regardless of the ability and performance of every other member. This, to be sure, is easier said than done, but it is the truth, nevertheless. No one has the God-given right to jeopardize his own chance of heaven, just because his brethren have more ability and better opportunities than he has.

Not only is every member vital to the body; there is also necessity for

diversity, if the body is to be an instrument for the accomplishment of the greatest possible good. If one will only stop and think of the many, many things which are accomplished, both separately and in conjunction with each other, by the various members of the human body, he then can begin to see the value of having people with so many different endowments in the church. The particular situation which brought about Paul's discussion of this phase of the subject now before us, or so it appears, was the attitude of some of the Corinthian brethren with certain spiritual gifts who looked down upon and belittled others who did not possess them. But Paul wanted them to know that the gifts and endowments of all the members are essential. And furthermore, God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and no member, however little his endowments may be, should ever be regarded as unimportant to the cause of Christ (Cf. Matt. 16: 26).

Thus, after showing in verses 17-19 the great need for diversity in the human body, and by comparison with the body of Christ, Paul concludes this portion of this section of our lesson text by saying, "But now they are many members, but one body." This is the apostle's way of affirming that the church is a unit. There are many members in it, but they all together make up but a single body. It seems difficult for some people to get the idea that the term "church" is used in the New Testament in this manner, seeing they continually talk about the various "branches of the church;" but if they could ever be brought to see that the church and the body of Christ are one and the same, it would not be difficult for them to understand the teaching of the New Testament regarding the oneness of the church. No man, in his right mind, will contend that Jesus has more than one body.

The Mutual Dependence of the Body's Members and Its Purpose

(1 Cor. 12: 21-27)

And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather,

those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The purpose of the passage just quoted is to set forth the interdependence of all the members of the body. It has already been pointed out that some were envious of others in the church who had greater gifts than they, and others who possessed them looked down upon those who did not have them; but here we have a different relationship and attitude. Instead of members of *action* and *sensation* being grouped together, the eye and the head versus the hand and the feet, with the implication that the members of the church who regard themselves as possessing superior gifts manifesting an attitude toward their humbler brethren which, for all practical purposes, amounted to a desire for their exclusion. Although people in the church today do not possess miraculous gifts as some of the Corinthian brethren did, it is, nevertheless, a fact in many places, that those who have the greatest ability see little need for the contribution to the work which the lesser gifted brethren are able to make. This is true, to an alarming degree, among preachers, song leaders, and specialists among teachers.

There is complete harmony among the members of the human body, along with due consideration for the welfare of each; and that is the manner in which the Lord intends for the members of the church, the body of Christ, to feel and act toward each other. Some members require more care and attention than others do; and those with the greatest lack of need should be both willing and happy to do what they can to improve the standing of those who are in need. God has tempered the human body together, "giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another." This, according to Paul, is God's will for the members of the spiritual body; and when that is done, it will not be difficult for those who compose it to "rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep." (Rom. 12: 15.)

Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. This is Paul's application of the truths which he has been discussing. The marginal reading has, instead of *severally members thereof*, "members each in his part." Goodspeed's translation reads as follows: "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it." The New English Bible renders the verse in these words: "Now you are Christ's body, and each of you a limb or organ of it." (Cf. John 15: 1-6.) No thoughtful and conscientious Christian can study the chapter from which our lesson text for today is taken, and remain indifferent toward the development and progress of each and ever member of the church, and especially those with whom he is associated.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was Paul's aim in writing the portion of First Corinthians from which the lesson text for today is taken?

How did he go about accomplishing his purpose?

How do we know that denominational bodies are not integral parts of the body of Christ?

What do New Testament writers mean by speaking of the church as the body of Christ?

In what way, then, is Christ related to the church?

What is the probable meaning of the church's being the fulness of Christ?

What light does this truth throw on the duty of the Lord's people?

The Golden Text

In what way are the Epistles of Colossians and Ephesians related to each other?

Where is the emphasis placed with reference to Christ and the church in the two letters?

What is meant by saying that Christ has the preeminence in all things?

In what way did God make known his eternal purpose to the world?

Through what means does God receive glory during the Christian dispensation?

What difference in Christian living would be in evidence, if the Lord's people would keep these truths always before them?

The Organic Unity of the Body

What was the condition of the world which first received Christianity?

What important lesson do we learn from that situation?

What is expected of the people who respond to Christianity?

In what way is the unity of the followers of Christ illustrated by the Old Testament?

What are the Lord's people exhorted to do with reference to the unity of the Spirit?

How does Paul illustrate the unity of the body of Christ?

In what way is the unity of the Spirit brought about?

The Church Is a Body with Many Members

What may very properly be called the "thesis" of this section of the lesson text? Why is this true?

In what way is the rest of this section of the lesson text related to verse 14?

What important lesson should we learn from the fact that there are "many members" in the body of Christ?

Why is every member of the body of Christ vital to the work of the whole body?

Why shouldn't a member of the church endeavor to belittle himself in the presence of others?

How does Paul go about illustrating this important truth?

How do we know that the "feelings" of the Lord's people are no standard of acceptance with God?

What alone will determine one's standing before God in the judgment day?

Where is envy usually seen among the Lord's people and why is this true?

Why is "diversity" essential among the Lord's people?

In what way does Paul affirm the unity of the body of Christ?

The Mutual Dependence of the Body's Members and Its Purpose

What is the primary purpose of this section of the lesson text?

Why is there such a great need for this lesson today?

Lesson VI—August 11, 1968

"THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE"

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 13: 1-13

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

2 And if I have *the gift of* prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

4 *J*ove suffereth long, *and* is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil;

6 Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth;

7 Beareth all things, believeth all

things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

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

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

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

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things.

12 For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*" (1 Cor. 13: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 3: 10-24.

Daily Bible Readings

August 5. M.....	Love a Command (John 15: 10-17)
August 6. T.....	Test of Discipleship (John 13: 31-35)
August 7. W.....	Murderer If Hate Brother (1 John 3: 21-24)
August 8. T.....	Love Brotherhood (1 Pet. 2: 13-17)
August 9. F.....	Love Enemies (Matt. 5: 43-48)
August 10. S.....	Love Neighbor (Luke 10: 25-27)
August 11. S.....	Love Fulfills Law (Rom. 13: 8-10)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

As Paul closed the portion of his epistle to the Corinthians which we call the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians, he wrote, "And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." This *most excellent way* is the way of love, and the entire lesson text for today is devoted to it. The church in Corinth was having some trouble over the question of spiritual gifts, as may be seen by reading chapters 12 and 14; and the purpose of the chapter now before us was and is to show the Lord's people a way to solve their problems, and to be happy on their way to heaven. We usually think of John as the apostle of love; but when we consider the writings of John and Paul together, it is easy to see that some of the greatest thoughts on the subject of love which are on record were written by the apostle to the Gentiles.

In commenting on this great hymn of love, The Speaker's Bible notes that the sudden burst into this rapturous portion of scripture is not unlike the manner of Paul; for in settling even small matters of disputed issues which belong to earth and time, he never loses the guidance and inspiration of the over-arching heavens. If men are troubled about subsidiary things, he lifts them into a loftier plane of vision, and bids them share the inspirations of diviner ideas and a richer life. As already indicated, Paul had in chapter 12 been discussing the value of certain spiritual gifts with all the precision of an accountant; for, as may be clearly seen from his writings, the apostle had a genius for arrangement and administration. His higher vision of things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ never permitted him to be impractical

with reference to the direction of the church or personal matters. And of all the unruly and unpromising things with which even an apostle had to deal, surely there was nothing more so than the pride which some of the Corinthian brethren manifested in connection with the gift of tongues. Too much in the way tongues often means too little in the way of love; and what was true in the Corinthian church in Paul's day, is still true today, even with tongues which are not inspired.

It is a noticeable fact that Paul does not give a formal definition of love. There are some things, even among the simplest and most elemental, which are not definable; and there are times when to attempt a definition is, for all practical purposes, to destroy. No one questions the beauty of the sunset, but who can define it? The artist can paint it, and the chemist can describe its colors; but no one can define its beauty. And so, there are no analyses, no abstractions, and no speculations in this great word about love. We are not even asked to consider such things, but rather to walk with love, a kindly, kingly presence, and to hear how love says that which must be said day by day, and to see how love does that which must be done, if we are to please God. It is here that we are able to see how love endures that which must be endured, and to observe how love stoops beneath the burdens of others, in order to lend a helping hand, while all the time maintaining that silence which is more full and availing than speech. Surely this is the best way to learn love's true meaning; for to find out what anything is we simply watch that which it does.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Way to Christian Eminence

(1 Cor. 13: 1-3)

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Any passage of scripture can best be understood in the light of its context. It has already been pointed out that when Paul wrote the chapter which serves as our lesson text for today, he was endeavoring to correct some mistaken views regarding spiritual gifts which were prevalent in the Corinthian church. This was especially true with reference to the ability to speak with tongues. Paul wanted his brethren in Corinth to have whatever gifts were possible for them, and so he said, "But desire earnestly the greater gifts. And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you." (1 Cor. 12: 31.) It is not wrong for any child of God to desire to excel in any worthy endeavor, provided his is actuated by an acceptable motive. This is Paul's reason for saying that which is contained in the text now before us.

Paul's "most excellent way" may very properly be described as the royal road to heaven, and it is certain that no responsible person will get there who does not follow this route. This way is literally a way in the superlative degree—a way which has in perfection all the qualities which should characterize a way. It is a way which is open to every one, an unobstructed way which leads directly to the goal of Christian greatness. It is the way of love which Paul describes in the words of our lesson text for today. It is also a way which involves personal responsibility; for only those who choose to do so can walk

therein. In the words of John Oxenham,

To every man there openeth
A way, and a ways, and a way.
And the high soul climbs the high
way,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between, on the misty
flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.

It is interesting to observe that in making the application of the way of love to the Corinthian brethren, Paul used himself, not them, as an illustration. He could have said, "If *you*," but, as it is, he said, "If *I*." This was in keeping with the principle of love which he is discussing. The three classes of gifts were (1) *emotional*, (2) *intellectual*, and (3) *practical* (see verses 1, 2, and 3); and they involved the *heart*, the *mind*, and the *will*. Therefore, if a person is able to demonstrate the great display of linguistic ability, which is possible to both men and angels, but does not have love as the ruling principle in his heart, he is no more than sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. The power behind one's tongue is not determined by the extent of his vocabulary, but by the quality of his heart.

One may be an intellectual genius, but if his mind is void of love, he is nothing in God's sight. If the intellectual Christian does not have sufficient love to cause him to serve the ignorant; if he does not have enough love to check his intellect when he is tempted to despise others, or to use his power to establish a selfish ascendancy over them; in short, if his intellect is not motivated by love, then he is nothing. And too, it makes no difference how much one is willing to do for others, or for some cause, if he is not actuated by the principle of love, it will profit him nothing. Any one therefore who is pleasing to God must see to it that his emotions, intellect, and will are kept in balance;

and the only thing which can accomplish that is the love which Paul describes in the chapter now before us. This leads us to consider

The Qualities of Christian Love

(1 Cor. 13: 4-7)

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

The verses which make up the first section of the lesson text, in which Paul comes near to exhausting the vocabulary of language in setting forth the excellence of love, we learn that the loftiest human faculties of man are frustrated without love; and that it is by its aid alone that they are brought to their proper perfection and just use. Love, then, is the one thing which all Christians need; and it is of vital importance to each one of us that we examine ourselves, and see whether or not we really possess this supreme and indispensable grace. This can best be done by turning the searchlight of this passage on our lives and characters, and learning whether or not they bear the "marks" of love. Paul's answer to those men who challenged and disputed his standing with the Lord was this, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus." (Gal. 6: 17.) The *marks* which he doubtless had primarily in mind were the scars which he bore as a result of his persecution for Christ's sake; and it is not out of place to speak of the fifteen characteristics which Paul names in the verses now before us as the "marks" of love, and the signs of its presence. We may also speak of them as the behavior of love; and it is only when our lives and character conform to this way of life and bear these marks that we can truthfully say that we have love.

The fifteen characteristics of love which are set forth in verses 4-7 are Paul's practical definition of love; and in the first two he tells us how

love behaves in the face of injuries and wrongs. It does not change to wrath and bitterness, but continues in kindness while suffering. "Love suffereth long, and is kind." (Cf. 1 Peter 2: 21-24; Rom. 12: 17-21.) Love does not envy the good fortunes of others. Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher, said, "Whoever feels pain hearing a good character of his neighbor, will feel a pleasure in the reverse. And those who despair to rise in distinction by their virtues, are happy if others can be depressed to a level with themselves." The true Christian therefore is not sad at the good fortune of another, but can rejoice with them that rejoice; and weep with them that weep. (Rom. 12: 15.)

To "vaunt" oneself and to be "puffed up" are closely related, the one (puffed up) being an inward condition, while the other (vaunt) is an outward manifestation. People vaunt themselves, that is, parade their possessions and attainments before others, especially those who are less fortunate in their estimation, because they are puffed up or inflated with pride and arrogance. The aim of such people is to demonstrate their own greatness and prove their superiority to their neighbors. To behave oneself unseemly is to betray a lack of sympathy for others by unbecoming and offensive conduct. Such people apparently have never learned that manners are an index to character. That is what Sir Walter Scott meant when, in one of his stories, he had a man strike another one on the head with a walking cane, and then told him to go home and mend his head, since his manners were beyond improvement.

The unselfishness of love is seen in the fact that it does not seek its own. Instead, Christian love lives not to get, to to give. Those who are motivated by this kind of a spirit are interested in the welfare of others. (Rom. 15: 1-3.) Love is not easily upset because of the unbecoming and sinful conduct of others. The story is told of a man who accompanied his Quaker friend to the newsstand to purchase a paper. After the purchase was made, the Quaker thanked the newsman politely, but the latter did not even ac-

knowledge the courtesy. In commenting on the action of the newsman, the Quaker's friend said, "He's a sullen fellow, isn't he?" whereupon the Quaker said, "Oh, he's that way every night." "Then," replied his friend, "why do you continue to be so polite to him?"; and he received this answer: "Why should I let *him* decide how I am going to act?" Thus, instead of "*reacting*" toward the rude newsman, the Quaker simply went on *acting* in keeping with his character. His sense of inner balance which is lacking in so any of us, was such as to enable him to maintain the proper relation between who he was and what he stood for, and how he should behave toward others. And instead of love's not being provoked, it does not take account of evil, that is, hold grudges against those who have mistreated them.

Love does not rejoice when sin is committed, and is not glad to see the downfall of those who are overcome by it. It is never glad when others go wrong; instead, it rejoices with the truth. Love and truth are both personified, and are pictured as having the same attitudes, the same likes and dislikes. Neither of them can have pleasure in wickedness; and it is for that reason that love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth *with* the truth. The four phases of the subject found in verse 7 may very properly be regarded as the *optimism* of love. In saying that love beareth all things, the idea seems to be that love is not afraid to face life, with all that life means; for it cannot be crushed beneath its burdens; it has vast powers of recovery. Love takes the kindest view of the deeds and circumstances of others; it endeavors to look upon the bright, rather than upon the dark side of things. And if it cannot see the best today, it will hope for it tomorrow. The endurance of love is not simply that dogged persistency which continues in spite of adversity; it is rather that quality of love which continues in spite of adversity; it is rather that quality of love which suffers and forgives—it cannot be overcome by evil.

The Greatest Thing in the World

(1 Cor. 13: 8-13)

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

Supernatural gifts were essential during the early days of the church, but as it passed on toward maturity, those gifts were discarded, three of which are mentioned in this verse, namely prophecies, tongues, and supernatural knowledge, mentioned along with supernatural faith in verses 1, 2. The verse now under consideration says that such gifts would pass away, and Ephesians 4: 11-16 tells when they would end. But love, on the other hand, will survive everything; it will hold its place, and never fall out.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

It appears that Paul's purpose here was to contrast the imperfect state of church—the period during which supernatural gifts were necessary for its instruction—with the perfect state, when such means would no longer be needed. The "perfect" which was to come is the *perfect source of information*, or, which is the same thing, the New Testament as we now have it. (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) The information which was available to the church was the same during both the childhood and the adult periods; but the *source* of the information was not. During the miraculous age, teaching was partial in scope, and available only when inspired men were present to speak; but with the passing of that age, the truth which was needed for the present dispensation was reduced to writing, and became available to all who desire to read and study it—hence, a perfect or complete source of information.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known.

These are but illustrations to en-

able the Corinthians, and all others who read this passage, to see the difference between the childhood and the manhood states of the church. Paul, speaking after the manner of men, simply placed himself on both sides of the question—I was a child, now I am a man. The divine knowledge which was essential to acceptable obedience was in "earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 3: 7) during the early state of the church, and the people therefore did not have access to the *perfect or complete source* of information, except as inspired men spoke to them; but after the age of miracles passed away and the full revelation was reduced to writing, then that which existed in earthen vessels became available in book form—hence, the perfect source of information.

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

This statement represents faith, hope, and love as being numerically distinct, yet we know from other parts of the New Testament that they are very closely associated with an intimate mutual affinity and dependence. All three must remain together, while time continues, in order to their own perfection, as well as the total character into which they enter. God has joined them; and man must not attempt to put them asunder. Faith must fill the mind with hope, and work by

love, if it is to show its genuineness as that living and operative faith which alone is approved in the New Testament. If hope does not rest on the foundation of faith, it is both visionary and unwarranted; and if it does not elevate the soul unto unfeigned love of both God and man, it is spurious and hypocritical. And love, if it is not the result of faith and sustained by hope is merely a natural impulse and essentially different from that "evangelical love" of which Paul spoke when he said, "But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. 1:5.)

The essential permanence of these three graces—faith, hope, and love—is here asserted, but since love embraces and harmonizes the other two, love therefore is the greatest. And, too, when earth is no more and the eternal day has dawned, faith will be lost in sight, and hope, in fruition; but love will continue for ever; for "God is love." (1 John 4: 16.) "Love never faileth," that is, it will never weaken, but will continue to hold its place. In the words of Ruskin,

But Love an everlasting crown
receiveth;
For she is Hope, and Fortitude,
and Faith,
Who all things hopeth, beareth,
and believeth.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the occasion for Paul's writing on the subject of love?
What did he have in mind when he wrote of the "most excellent way"?
What was the chief purpose of the treatise on love?
What guiding principle did Paul always use in trying to settle difficulties among brethren?
Wherein does the importance of the lesson on love for us lie?
What probable reason may be suggested for Paul's not giving a formal definition of love?
How can one best define love?

The Way to Christian Eminence

What help in understanding Paul's purpose in writing, as well as the significance of that which he says, does one get from the context?
Is it wrong for a child of God to seek to excel? Give reasons for your answer.

How may Paul's most excellent way be very properly described?
Into what does this way open?
Who is permitted to walk in this way?
Why did Paul, in applying the principle of love, refer to himself, rather than to the Corinthian offenders?
What three classes of gifts did he use to illustrate his lesson?
What do these three classes of gifts involve?
Why are great abilities and possessions void in the absence of love?
How alone may one keep his emotions, intellect, and will power in balance?

The Qualities of Christian Love

Why should every child of God seek to determine whether or not love is the ruling principle with him?
In what way may this discovery best be made?
In what way does Paul simplify this testing on our part?
In what way are the "marks of love" and the "behavior of love" related?
How may characteristics of love does Paul

set forth in this section of the lesson text?
 In what way does love behave in the face of injury and ill-treatment?
 How does love feel toward the good fortune of others?
 How are "vaunting" and being "puffed up" related?
 How does one behave himself unseemly and how does he manifest his unselfishness?
 Why isn't love easily "upset" by others and how does it feel toward wrongdoing?
 What are the basic ingredients of love's optimism?

The Greatest Thing in the World
 Why were spiritual gifts essential to the early church and why were they discontinued?
 When does the Bible teach that such gifts passed away?
 Why is it that love never fails, or, which is the same thing, never falls out?
 What is the "perfect" which Paul said would come?
 In what way did Paul illustrate this point?
 In what way are faith, hope, and love related?
 Why do all three of them *abide*?
 Why is love the greatest of them?

Lesson VII—August 18, 1968

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Lesson Text

1 Cor. 15: 12-21, 50-58

12 Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

* * * * *

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

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

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

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

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

55 O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Je'-sus Christ.

58 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."*
 (1 Cor. 15: 44.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 15: 22-49.

Daily Bible Readings

August 12. M..... Hope of a Resurrection (Heb. 11: 32-40)
 August 13. T..... Change in Body to Occur (Phil. 3: 17-21)
 August 14. W..... Power of the Resurrection (Phil. 3: 7-17)

- August 15. T.....General Resurrection (John 5: 25-29)
 August 16. F.....Some Denied the Resurrection (Matt. 22: 23-33)
 August 17. S.....Resurrection Long Believed In (Job 19: 25-29)
 August 18. S.....Great Resurrection Chapter (1 Cor. 15)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—First Corinthians was written in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The question of a resurrection from the dead is strictly a Bible subject, insofar as its origin is concerned; for no one apart from God ever caused a dead person to live again. The term "resurrection" literally means a coming forth from the dead, a return from death to live; and that would be impossible if a death did not occur. While it is true that the conception of a resurrection was not thoroughly developed in the Old Testament and the literal coming forth of the body from the dead is not frequently referred to in that part of the Bible, the idea is there; and some of the most comforting words on the subject, words which are often used today, were spoken by men of great antiquity. (Job 14: 13-15; 19: 25-27; cf. Heb. 11: 17-19.)

But faith in the resurrection of the dead could not be full and complete during the Old Testament period; for the reason that everything pointed to the coming of the Messiah. The God of the Old Testament is the eternal, ever-living God, and while death came to practically every person during that period, to the wicked and righteous alike, as a result of sin, if redemption is to have a complete victory over sin and death, there must ultimately be the hope of a resurrection from the dead. In commenting on this aspect of the question, Baker's Dictionary of Theology observes that "as faith in resurrection became increasingly common, more and more frequently expressed during the post-exilic and Maccabean periods, at the time of the advent of Christ, it 'had become

an almost universally accepted dogma of Palestinian Judaism and a test of orthodoxy' (William Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels*, Edinburgh, 1908, p. 292). The Sadducean denial of the resurrection was an exception, and did not express the common view of first-century Judaism."

But when we come to the New Testament, the theme of the resurrection of the body* including that of Christ, is given more space than any other one fundamental Christian truth, with the possible exception of the death of Jesus. Christ seldom spoke of his approaching death without including a prediction of his resurrection within three days; and as an indication of his own power over death, he brought back to life three people who had died. It was in connection with the resurrection of Lazarus that Jesus uttered his famous words regarding the significance of that term. (John 11: 21-26.) It appears that Martha had never realized that the resurrection had a spiritual bearing; she merely thought of it as a distant event, as a mere matter of destiny, like that of birth and death. Jesus declares that he, and not some far-away event, is the resurrection, and the life. Life is the larger and inclusive idea, and resurrection is involved in life as an incident made necessary by the temporary and apparent triumph of physical death. This view of the subject brings the resurrection of the dead closer to every child of God, since Christ takes it out of time, vitalizes, and puts it into the category of faith.

The Golden Text

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." This passage should be read in the light of its context: "But someone will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?

Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some

other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weak-

ness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. 15: 35-49.)

The Text Explained

Paul's Reply to a Fundamental Error

(1 Cor. 15: 12-19)

Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Paul's question here clearly implies that some of the members of the Corinthian church denied the reality of the resurrection; and that meant, of course, that they also denied the resurrection gospel. They, apparently, had gone a step further than some whom Paul mentioned in his second letter to Timothy, men who taught that the resurrection had already passed. "But shun profane 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." (2 Tim. 2: 16-18.)

It not only is interesting, but exceedingly profitable, to observe the manner in which Paul sought to demolish the Corinthian error regarding the resurrection. He began by stating the basic facts of the gospel which they had believed and by which they had been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord. "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold

fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." He then introduced an array of witnesses of the resurrection of Christ which no sane or thoughtful person could gainsay. And he concludes the introductory portion of his argument with these challenging words: "*so we preach, and so ye believed.*" (See 1 Cor. 15: 1-11.)

Too often brethren, in seeking to refute a false position, begin by a tacit, if not actually an implied, assumption that the error of the antagonists has a basis on which to stand. But Paul, as we have already seen, first intrenched his own position before advancing to demolish the claims of the opposition. If those who have a clear understanding of the truth of the Scriptures, and a firm grasp on the proposition in question, will see to it first of all that the truth regarding whatever subject they plan to discuss is stated by indisputable terms, they will find that those in error will find it exceedingly difficult to make an impressive reply. When John C. Calhoun was on his deathbed, he said of Daniel Webster, his great antagonist in constitutional law, "Show him a fact in the path of his argument, and Mr. Webster is

dumb." This is not only splendid testimony to intellectual integrity; it is also incontestable proof of the power of truth.

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised.

As Paul begins his work of demolishing error, he literally enters the territory of the opposition, and takes them in their own craftiness. His argument is a negative demonstration, which takes the form of a destructive hypothetical syllogism with two branches, the first of which is stated in the verses just quoted. Here the apostle deduces two propositions from the supposed non-existence of the fact of the resurrection, namely, (1) the *emptiness* (*kenos*) of both the preaching and faith regarding it; (2) the *falsehood* of the witnesses attesting it. Thus Paul bluntly placed the proposition before the Corinthian skeptics. If anyone can prove the impossibility of a resurrection from the dead, he then by the same argument proves that Christ was not raised up; for he died as a man: he fully identified himself with the human race. (Cf. Heb. 2: 14-18.)

For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; and ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in his life, we are of all men most pitiable.

These verses set forth the second branch of Paul's destructive hypothetical syllogism, namely, the unreality of the effects which were supposedly derived from the resurrection, if it did not take place. The original terms for "vain" in verses 14 and 17 are not the same. They are *kenos* and *mataios*, respectively; and while they are apparently used as synonyms, they are not identical. In commenting on their use, Trench says that "in the first is characterized the hollowness, in the second the aimlessness." And so with this

"two-pronged" destructive hypothetical syllogism, Paul placed his opposers in Corinth, with reference to the resurrection, in the position of affirming that the apostles were liars and that the new life and hopes of their fellow-Christians were illusions only, or of admitting their error and accepting the truth as Paul proclaimed it. (Cf. The Expositor's Greek Testament.) People who oppose the truth should be made to see something of the consequences of their error. (Cf. Rom. 1: 18f; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

The Relation of Christ's Resurrection to Ours

(1 Cor. 15: 20, 21)

But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

In the preceding paragraphs of the chapter now under consideration, Paul has clearly proved the actuality of Christ's personal resurrection; and that is sufficient for him to make an unconditional affirmation regarding it. But Christ never stands alone in such matters. The apostle has already made it clear that he is the head of a body with many members (1 Cor. 12: 12ff), and it is unthinkable that something can happen to the head without affecting the body. He is also "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8: 29; Col. 1: 18), and his own resurrection not only demonstrates that bodily resurrection is possible; it is inevitable for those who are in him, that is, in his body, which is the church. The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that the universal redemption of Christ's people from the grave is indispensable for the realization of human destiny and for the assured triumph of God's kingdom. (Verses 24-28.) The apostle thus advances from the "experimental" (verses 12-19) to the "theological" proof of his proposition, much as he does in Romans 5: 1-11, 12-21.

The expression "But now," with which verse 20 begins, marks the logical point which Paul has reached by the *reductio ad impossibile* (reduction to an impossibility) of the negative proposition which he

assailed in verse 12. He then shows in the remainder of the paragraph (verses 13-19), as already pointed out, that Christ has been raised; and there is therefore a resurrection of the dead. "Now" the ground has been cleared and the foundation laid for the declaration that the Christian dead shall rise in him—Christ has "been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." Godet notes that he has been raised in the manner and purpose, "not to remain alone in the estate of glory."

With the coming of Christ, death for the Christian is now regarded as a sleep. This does not mean that those who are asleep in Christ are unconscious, but rather that they are no longer alive to or in touch with those who are upon the earth. (Luke 16: 19-31.) The "firstfruits" have a very definite significance in the Bible, chief of which is the pledge or promise of the full harvest. And so, when the firstfruits were in, the farmer had within his possession an unassailable proof that the harvest was coming. The law of Moses required that the firstfruits be presented to God, as an acknowledgment that the land and all its fruits were a gift from him; and they were in turn allotted to the priests and Levites. (Deut. 18: 1-5; Neh. 10: 35ff.) And since the firstfruits were both a sample and a pledge of the forthcoming harvest, its figurative use is here applied to Christ, whose rising is both the proof and pledge of the rest of the harvest; and so in joyful anticipation, Paul in effect exclaims, "The resurrection has begun!" Verse 21 shows something of the relationship of the risen Christ with those who are asleep in him, as indicated by "firstfruits." The resurrection of Christ is the pattern of our resurrection.

The Dead and the Living Will Be Fitted for Immortality (1 Cor. 15: 50-58)

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound,

and the dead shall be raised incorruptive, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

In the paragraph which precedes the passage just quoted, Paul explains something of the nature of the resurrection. Since the spirit must have a body (2 Cor. 5: 1-5), the resurrection of the body is an essential part of the divine plan, and is necessary to the fulfillment of God's purpose in Christ. But inasmuch as flesh and blood (the material) have no place in the spiritual realm, the change from the one to the other must be accomplished. This will be true of both the living and the dead at the time of the coming of Christ and the general resurrection; for at that time there will be some who have not died. (1 Thess. 4: 13-18.)

But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul reaches this climax he breaks into a song of triumph over death, in the strain of Hosea's rapturous anticipation of Israel's resurrection from national death. (Hosea 13: 9-14.) In the words of Watson, "pardoned soul needs not fear death. He may look on death with joy, who can look on forgiveness with faith. To a pardoned soul death has lost his sting. Death to a pardoned sinner is like the arresting of a man after the debt is paid." In speaking of the sting of death, the idea is that of a serpent. Sin is the bite or sting with which he slays men, and the power of poisonous strength of sin was found in the curse which the law pronounced upon all offenders. The triple power of law, sin and death is comparable to a firm chain, which can be broken only by "the word of the cross." (1 Cor. 1: 18; cf. Rom. 1: 16.) Some one has noted that the glorious burden of the fifteenth

chapter of First Corinthians is the emancipation and enlargement of life in the risen Christ. And having the large life, we are urged to live largely! Christianity emerges and expresses itself in a passionate enthusiasm for both god and humanity.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.

The original word for "vain" in this verse is *kenos* which means empty or hollow. Verse 58 sets forth the specific course of action which all Christians should follow, and assigns the powerful motive for their faithfulness. The life which we now are experiencing is the sphere of our present labors for the Lord; but when this life is over and the glorious resurrection day has dawned, we shall be raised to new activities which shall never end. (Rev. 22: 3.) In the words of Kate Cameron,

When our work is ended, we shall
sweetly rest,
'Mid the sainted spirits, safe on
Jesus' breast;
All our trials over, we shall gladly
sing,
Grave! where is thy vict'ry?
Death! where is thy sting?
Earth has many sorrows, but they
cannot last,
And our greatest troubles, quickly
will be past;
If we look to Jesus, he will give
us strength;
By his grace we shall be conquer-
ors at length.
When the storm is over, sweet
will be the calm,
After life's long battle, bright the
victor's palm;
And the cross of anguish which
now weighs us down,
We'll exchange in heaven for a
shining crown.
Though the dark waves roll high,
we will be undismayed,
"Let us pass over the river, and
rest under the shade,
Rest under the shade, rest under
the shade of the trees."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How do we know that the origin of the doctrine of the resurrection is a Bible subject?

What is known of its development throughout the Scriptures?

Why couldn't faith in the resurrection be full and complete during Old Testament times?

What difference does the New Testament make with reference to the subject?

The Golden Text

What is the practical meaning of the words of the golden text?

Will our body be raised at the last day?

Paul's Reply to a Fundamental Error

What does Paul's question imply regarding the faith and teaching of some in Corinth?

In what way did Paul go about demolishing the error among the Corinthian Christians?

What important lesson is there in this for us?

What was Paul's first argument regarding the error which was being taught in Corinth?

What was his second argument and what did both arguments do for the false teachers?

Why should those who oppose the truth be made to see the consequences of error?

The Relation of Christ's Resurrection to Ours

Why was Paul in position to make an un-

conditional affirmation regarding the resurrection of Christ?

What relationship did that have to the question of a general resurrection?

Why is death for the Christian often spoken of as a sleep?

What is implied by the term "sleep"?

Discuss the doctrine of the "firstfruits" as set forth in the Scriptures.

The Dead and the Living Will Be Fitted for Immortality

Why is the resurrection of the body an essential part of the divine plan for God's people?

Why must the ones who are alive when Christ comes again have their bodies changed?

Why can the faithful child of God rejoice in the face of death?

What is meant by the "sting of death"?

How alone can the chain which binds sinners be broken?

What appears to be the chief purpose of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians?

In what sense did Paul use the word "vain" in verse 58?

What was the apostle endeavoring to do in that verse?

What motive did he assign for faithfulness?

What is the present sphere of our service for the Lord?

Where shall we serve him eternally, if we are faithful to him?

What effect should a lesson of this kind have on us?

What river must we cross before being with the Lord?

Lesson VIII—August 25, 1968

THE CORINTHIANS, CHRIST'S EPISTLE

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 3: 1-10, 18

1 Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you?

2 Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men;

3 Being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables *that are* hearts of flesh.

4 And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God;

6 Who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

7 But if the ministration of death, written, *and* engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Is'-ra-el could not look stedfastly upon the face of Mó'-ses for the glory of his face; which *glory* was passing away:

8 How shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory?

9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

10 For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.

18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Golden Text.—“Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.” (2 Cor. 3: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 2: 14-17.

Daily Bible Readings

August 19. M.	Paul Writes to the Church in Corinth (2 Cor. 1: 1-11)
August 20. T.	An Earlier Letter to Corinth (1 Cor. 1: 1-10)
August 21. W.	A Still Earlier Letter (1 Cor. 5: 9-13)
August 22. T.	Work and Opposition in Corinth (Acts 18: 1-9)
August 23. F.	Paul's Appreciation for Corinth (2 Cor. 6: 1-13)
August 24. S.	Writing in Affliction to Corinth (2 Cor. 2: 3-9)
August 25. S.	Corinthians Made Sorry (2 Cor. 7: 8-12)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

First Corinthians, as we saw in the study of that letter, was written to correct some disorders in the Corinthian church, and in response to a letter of inquiry which Paul had received from the Corinthian brethren. But there was something about Paul's epistle to them which evidently did not please them. Perhaps it was because he had so severely condemned their division into factions and parties. At any rate, First Corinthians did not have the effect upon the brethren in Cor-

inth with the party spirit which Paul intended and hoped that it would have. Instead of renouncing their divided condition, it seems that it caused some of them to intensify their efforts along that line. It is evident that some influential and energetic person in Corinth made it his business to crystallize this momentary resentment against Paul, and see to it that the opposition was effectively used in an effort to destroy the apostle's influence in the Corinthian church. (2 Cor. 11: 4.)

Thus instead of causing the brethren in Corinth to give up their party spirit and blend themselves harmoniously into a unified church life, it appears that the factions themselves shifted just enough to unite all who for any reason objected to Paul. Many accusations and insinuations were made against him. His apostolic authority was denied, his motives were impugned, and his character for candor was assailed. Paul refers to some of these things in Second Corinthians, chapters 10-13. This section of the epistle reflects something of the painful stage of the controversy which raged between Paul and the opposition in the Corinthian church.

When we think of the epistles of Paul, we naturally think of the letters which he wrote to the churches and individuals of his day; but they are not what he had in mind when he penned the words of our lesson text for today. The "epistle" which we are to consider in this study was not written upon paper, or any other material in that category; but upon the hearts and characters of living people. If the people who profess to follow Christ today could be made to realize the full significance of the truth that the message of Christ is indeed written in their hearts and lives, and to act accordingly; it would not be long until mankind could truthfully say, "The face of all the world is changed, I think, since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul." But in spite of what the Lord's people may or may not be doing with respect to the matter just referred to, they are making a lasting impression upon both their own brethren and the world about them; for they are, in a very true sense, the Lord's representatives here upon the earth. (Matt. 5: 13-16; 1 Peter 2: 11, 12.)

The Speaker's Bible has pointed out that the character of a communication must always be determined by the nature of the medium through which it is made. This is a universal law, and its applications and developments are full of interest, as well as the source of all that which we call "style" in literature.

The common thought must clothe itself in plain, homely, and familiar words, while the grander and loftier conception creates for itself a fitting vesture, and moves in the glory of some picturesque and stately phrase. Some things can be fitly expressed only in verse, others only in prose; but there comes a time when one passes beyond that which language has the power to express in any way. There are some things which can be revealed to us only through music, others can be expressed only by marble or canvas, and still others only through Nature, which has been called God's Art. (Cf. Psalm 19: 1.) The true artist is one in whom the feeling of the fitness of the message and the medium of its expression are clearly understood and by him made known. This is true because the message is dumb without its true medium of expression, and the medium without its worthy message is insignificant and weak.

In view of such statements as follow: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2: 6b-8; cf. Psalm 8), it is certain that the highest and finest element in the life of the world is human nature; and it is for this reason that the loftiest and fullest revelations have been given through the medium of human nature. That which could not be spoken in words, breathed through music, or made known through the subtle harmonies of Nature (cf. Rom. 20), was revealed in man. Throughout the history of the Bible, a human life often became God's voice, or his penman, to make known his divine truth; and it was according to this principle that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1: 14; Heb. 1: 1, 2.) There are some things which can best, and often must, be told through living epistles.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Corinthian Christians Were Proof of Paul's Divine Ministry

(2 Cor. 3: 1-3)

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? Ye are our epistles, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh.

Paul's questions, with which this section of our lesson text begins, were occasioned by his remark in the last verse of the preceding chapter: "For we are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ."

(2 Cor. 2: 17.) His enemies in Corinth apparently had charged that he was guilty of self-laudation, and that by dishonest means. (2 Cor. 4: 2; 10: 12, 18.) It is as if they had said, as Vincent has it, "You are beginning again the old strain of self-commendation as in the first epistle." (See 1 Cor. 9: 15-23.) The apostle had already reminded the Corinthians that they should have commended him. (2 Cor. 12: 11.)

After getting the issue squarely before the Corinthian brethren, Paul quickly points out that he, the one who first brought the gospel to their city and who was responsible for the planting of the church there, had no need to present formal credentials to that congregation; and that it would be equally out of place for him to seek recommendations from them. The apostle already had testimonies to his character and office which were far superior to any which might be written on the writing materials of their day; and he made it clear that these letters of commendation could easily be pointed to, if any wanted to charge that his apostolic office was self-assumed or that he delivered his gospel message in his own way and by his own authority. (Cf. Gal. 1: 11, 12.)

The Corinthians themselves were Paul's credentials. "If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am

to you; for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. 9: 2.) In saying, "Ye are our epistles written in our hearts," Paul may have had in mind his labors among them which had left an indelible impression upon his heart. In commenting on the term "epistle," Vincent notes that "the figure which follows is freely and somewhat loosely worked out, and presents different faces in rapid succession. The figure itself is that of a *commentary letter* representing the Corinthian church: 'ye are our letter.' This figure is carried out in three directions: 1. *As related to the apostles' own consciousness.* The Corinthian church is a letter written on the apostles' hearts. Their own consciousness testifies that that church is the fruit of a divinely accredited, honest, and faithful ministry. 2. *As related to the Corinthians themselves.* The church needs no letter to commend the apostles to it. It is its own commendation. As the visible fruit of the apostles' ministry they are a commendatory letter to themselves. If the question arises among them, 'Were Paul and his colleagues duly commissioned?'—the answer is, 'We ourselves are the proof of it.' 3. *As related to others outside the Corinthian church.* The answer to the charge that the Corinthians have been taught by irregular and uncommissioned teachers is the same: 'Behold the fruit of their labors in us.' We are their commission." Paul uses the expression here *written in our hearts* to express just how deep and constant is his love and concern for the Corinthian Christians is. His affection for them is not formal or transient, but very personal and marked by an enduring love.

Paul appears never to lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a communication of life—the life of him who is the source of all life; and when that life is made a part of every obedient believer's life (cf. Col. 3: 4), it is easy for those about him to see that he is "an epistle of Christ." They show the marks of the Christian spirit. It has been written on their hearts in the change which the Spirit of Christ

had made in their lives and which was plain for all men to read. (Cf. Gal. 5: 19-24.) This kind of epistle cannot be written by men, as letters are usually written; instead, it is ministered by inspired men, and it is written in the hearts of those who accept the gospel. Some one has observed that life does not begin with a man until he is filled with the truth, which the joy of his existence makes it necessary for him to utter. Then what he is proclaims the truth which he believes. Thus, it is the glorious privilege of the child of God to make the truth seem more true, and to make a lie seem more false, by the way he lives. This is the practical meaning of being an epistle of Christ, so far as we are concerned. It is not possible to think of any greater obligation or opportunity than that we shall concern ourselves with living such lives as will inspire those around us to want to serve God and think of us as being an epistle of Christ. It is for this reason that we must be concerned about the impression which we create and the attitudes which others will take toward all the activities of our lives.

The Splendor of the New Faith

(2 Cor. 3: 4-10)

And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward; not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Paul indeed was filled with confidence, but he hastens to explain that it was not self-confidence. No uninspired man could write such an epistle as Paul had written in Corinth, or fulfil such a ministry as he had accomplished, without divine help. The truth which had been written in their hearts, and which had transformed them, was of God. He had called the apostles, and had made them sufficient for the task of ministering the new covenant which is the divine instrument for the regeneration of lost men. The Standard Bible Commentary paraphrases this portion of the lesson text in

these words: "The truth, which, written in your hearts, has thus transformed you, is wholly of God; so that our ability or sufficiency to write such an epistle as ye are, is all from God, who made us thus sufficient by calling us to be minister of that new covenant which performs such wonders of regeneration, instead of calling us to be (as my Judaizing opponents ever seek to coerce me to be) a minister of the old covenant. This old covenant was given in letters graven on stone, and hence was a law of letters governing us wholly from without. But the new covenant, though also committed to writing, and hence in a sense external to us, is a code of principles governing us from within, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This law of letters without could only bring upon us condemnation and death (Rom. 7: 7-11; 1 Cor. 15: 56); but this law of the spirit within us (verse 2) gives us life (Rom. 2: 27-29; 6: 4, 11; 8: 2, 10, 11; 1 Cor. 15: 41; Gal. 5: 18). The contrast in verse 6 is not between the outward and inward sense of Scripture, but between the outward and inward power of those two great dispensations, Jewish and Christian."

But if the ministration of death, written, and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth.

This passage is one of several in the New Testament in which the inspired writer draws a contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Gal. 3: 15-4: 7; Heb. 8: 6-13.) The law of Moses is called the ministration of death, because it condemned all violations of it and all failures to keep it (cf. Heb. 2: 2), and gave pardon to none. The gospel of Christ, on the other hand, imputes righteousness to all

who obey it and plainly declares that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8: 1.) Paul told his hearers in Antioch of Pisidia that those who believe in Christ as "justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13: 39.) Thus, throughout the New Testament, the contrast between the two systems is plainly stated.

The failure of the Judaizers of Paul's day to understand this difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ was the chief cause of the trouble in the church in Corinth; and it was for the purpose of clearing up that misunderstanding that the words of the text before us were written. The law of Moses was glorious, in that it came from God (Ex. 34: 29-35); but since that system was only a temporary measure, its glory in time faded in the brighter glory of the gospel of Christ. This lesson was sorely needed in Paul's day; and if one will only look around him now, it will not be difficult for him to see that it is still needed. It is a prominent fact that many among the denominations proceed on the assumption that the Lord's people today are indiscriminately under Moses, the prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can read the first part of the Book of Hebrews without being impressed with the finality of God's message to man, as it is spoken through Christ. In him God has spoken everything which he has to say, and that means that he has spoken everything which man needs to hear, in order to be well pleasing unto him. Peter also makes this matter clear when he declares, "Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 22, 23.) The glory of the place and authority of Moses has long since been eclipsed by that of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Cf. Heb. 3: 1-6.)

Transformed by Beholding

(2 Cor. 3: 18)

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.

Only Moses reflected the glory of God when he delivered the law to the people of Israel, but now all Christians have that privilege—"but we all." The process now under consideration may very properly be called the Lord's method of sanctification. Or, to state the same thing in another way, this is the Lord's method of making us like his Son. The Holy Spirit has revealed Christ to us, and we all, with unveiled face are permitted to behold that glory; and as we continue the process, we are changed from one degree of glory to another; until eventually we shall be made into his image. "Beloved, now are ye children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 2, 3.)

The idea of "beholding" the glory of the Lord is not an indifferent matter. The original word for "beholding as in a mirror" is a present participle, and it implies a continuous process. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 3; 1 Peter 1: 22; Col. 3: 1-4.) The truth is that we can look upon the glory of the Lord, only as we obey that which the Spirit has set forth regarding him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12: 1, 2.) So much so did Paul believe this and practice that principle that later on in his life he could say: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2: 20.)

"My life restores its borrowed ray,

That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May richer, fuller be."

The lives of many Americans have been enriched by Hawthorne's story of the Great Stone Face. A boy, as the story is told, lived in the shadow of the Great Stone Face; and all during his lifetime he dreamed of a day when a man would come to their village with a face that would reflect the calm and peace of the Man of the Mountains. But while waiting for the benevolent man to come, the boy never ceased to look upon and study the face which was ever before him. Years passed, but his dream, remained unfulfilled. His hopes, however, never faltered; for he verily believed that he would one day

see the man with a face like the one in the mountains. At last this boy came to be an old man; and one evening as he stood before a small crowd in the village, a man exclaimed, "Your face," sir, "is exactly like that of the Great Stone Face." Thus, the very one who had dreamed so long of a face which would match the one of the Mountains had wrought such a likeness in himself.

We shall be like him, O golden day!

We shall be like him, O happy day!

When life is over by and by,

He will greet us face to face beyond the sky.—D. Lauk Currens.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What, apparently, was the occasion for Paul's writing our Second Corinthians?

What was the cause for the resentment which was directed toward the apostle?

In what sense are Christian people the epistles of Christ?

Under what circumstances are "living epistles" essential to God's communication?

The Corinthian Christians Were Proof of Paul's Divine Ministry

What was the occasion of the questions which Paul asked in this part of the lesson text?

In what way did he answer those questions?

Why didn't the apostle need any commendations from the Corinthian brethren?

What three relationships were affected by the living epistles of the Corinthians?

What is the primary message which such epistles convey?

In what way were the epistles of Christ written?

What effect does all of this have on those who are genuine epistles of Christ?

The Splendor of the New Faith

What was the confidence with which Paul was filled and how did it come about?

What is the new covenant and what is its purpose?

What contrast does Paul set forth in verse 6 of this section of the lesson text?

Discuss Paul's contrast between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.

Why was the law of Moses called the ministration of death?

What wonderful blessing does the gospel of Christ impart to obedient believers?

What was the chief cause of the trouble which existed in the church in Corinth?

What effect did the gospel of Christ have on the glory of the law of Moses?

Why is this lesson so urgently needed today?

How do we know that there will be no further revelation from God to man?

Transformed by Beholding

What difference is seen between the two covenants with respect to the reflected glory of God?

Explain and discuss the Lord's method of sanctification?

How alone, then, can one become like Christ?

How often must we look upon the glory of Christ, if we are to be well pleasing to God?

Why won't an occasional glimpse of that glory suffice?

How does one go about beholding the glory of Christ?

Illustrate the process of becoming like Christ.

Lesson IX—September 1, 1968

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 5: 1-11

1 For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

2 For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst

we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight);

8 We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

9 Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him.

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

11 Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."* (2 Cor. 4: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 5: 12-21.

Daily Bible Readings

August 26. M.....Looking for Eternal Things (2 Cor. 4: 5-18)
 August 27. T.....Many Mansions Awaiting (John 14: 1-6)
 August 28. W.....A Glorious Body Awaiting (Phil. 3: 17-21)
 August 29. T.....Bodies to Come Forth (Dan. 12: 1-3; John 5: 28, 29)
 August 30. F.....We Shall Be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)
 August 31. S.....An Incorruptible Body (1 Cor. 15: 50-58)
 September 1. S.....The Heavenly City (Rev. 21: 1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Hope is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, and is one of the three great principles or graces which Paul says continues. "But now abideth faith, hope, love, three three: and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13: 13.) Hope therefore is one of the basic elements of Christian character; and it is entirely proper to refer to it as belonging to the very heart of our salvation. Paul also says that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8: 24), and in Hebrews 6: 19 we learn that hope

is the anchor of the soul. Not only are we saved by hope so far as the salvation of our souls is concerned; it is also wholly impossible for any person to live a normal life even in this world without hope. Thomas Campbell, the poet, sang,

Auspicious hope! in thy sweet garden grow

Wreaths for each toil, a charm for every woe.

Someone has observed that the lack of hope in one's life is not a natural weakness; it is, rather, the

result of a deep estrangement from Christ. It is utterly impossible for one to please God or be happy without hope. The principal ingredients of hope are (1) *expectation*—the outlooking of the soul as opposed to the inlooking; the looking away to some person or good; (2) *desire*—one may expect something and dread it; but when expectation is coupled with desire, then he wants it; (3) *anticipating*—the bringing of the distant and the future near; living in the future, as it were, before it comes; seeing things as they will be, and not merely as they are.

Linguists tell us that the word "hope" is from a root which signifies the opening of the eyes, and that it has a close family relationship with the term "gape" which describes the opening of the mouth. With these two related ideas in mind, it is fairly easy to get two very suggestive pictures which may help us to get the basic meaning of the word *hope*. One is that of a little child standing on tiptoe with wide-open eyes, in evident and eager expectation of some wonderful sight, and with all of its nature thrilled with interest and excitement. The other

picture is that of a cozy nest of newly hatched birds, with upturned and opened beaks, waiting for the morsels of food which the parent-birds are bringing to them.

These two pictures, when viewed by thoughtful people, indicate the attitude of those who look and wait in anticipation for that which the gospel has to offer those who are obedient to it. In the words of another, it is the attitude of expectant forelook, of confident waiting, of awakened desire which leaps toward an assured satisfaction. And it is safe to say that there is no more sustaining and transforming influence on human life, than the influence of hope. If a man has hope that his weary struggle will end in something better, that the battle will result in victory, that from the surgical operation a healthier and more satisfying life will emerge, then he has an asset which will very likely bring him through his ordeal. And of all the realms in which this virtue is indispensable, the spiritual is the chief. The spirit of hope is absolutely essential, if success is to be achieved. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in Jehovah, and whose trust Jehovah is." (Jer. 17: 7.)

The Golden Text

"Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." In the fourth chapter of Second Corinthians, from which our golden text is taken, Paul reviews his ministry and shows that he has made honest and diligent use of the gracious gifts which God has given him. Not all of Paul's hearers believed him, however, and made false charges against him. This was a blow to the heart of Paul. He emphasized the fact that it was Christ whom he preached and not himself and recalled the experience of his conversion, which was the basis of all he was and taught. Paul saw a divine purpose in the fact that he, as well as other mortal men were preaching the gospel and that God sustained them in their wearing work. He said: "We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus

may be manifested in our body." (2 Cor. 4: 8-10.)

Paul's faith gave him contact with the inexhaustible resources of God. Much of the secret of his victory was the attitude toward his sufferings which faith brought. He repeated and emphasized the thought that the suffering which he endured he accepted for the sake of Christ who suffered and died and arose from the dead and is now our Lord and Master. Because of his faith and oneness with Christ he could share the same feeling which Christ expressed before Calvary: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." (John 12: 24.) Paul saw the same process at work in his own dying. It took great faith to remain dedicated to the purpose of God under such continual criticism and suffering. He told them then the foundation on which his faith rested and how he was upheld and sustained in this difficult and trying work:

"Knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus and shall present us with you." (2 Cor. 4: 14.) His attitude toward his suffering was turning burdens into inspirations. Samuel Rutherford wrote of the Cross, "He that takes up that bitter Tree and carries it quietly will find it such a burden as wings are to a bird or sails to a boat."

After explaining these things to the Corinthians Paul said: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." The flesh is decaying, but the spirit is expanding and opening into a fuller, more magnificent life. The strength that is put out in the service of the kingdom is being transformed into the power of the living spirit. There is also the same process in the natural world. Just as nature utilizes and conserves her energy in the sun as it pours down

its warmth upon the earth and the plants and trees take it up and transform it into food and flowers, just in the same way when our energy is dedicated to God and used for his service is transformed into the beauty and power of the spirit until the death of the body results in the full release of the spirit. Afflictions, trials, adversities, trouble and sorrow are transmitted into glory beyond. These things are the means by which the spirit is purified, developed, and brought to blossom in the beauty of Christlikeness. Our troubles and trials here are but for a moment compared to the glory which is massive and unfading in the next world. Paul could say this because he did not just look to "the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. 4: 18.)

The Text Explained

The Basis of Our Hope for the Future

(2 Cor. 5: 1-4)

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.

In discussing the persecutions, tribulations, and hardships which characterized his and his fellow laborers' ministry, Paul had manifested a spirit of optimism; and our golden text gave the reason for that hopeful outlook.

If there were no hope, there would be no optimism; for optimism proceeds upon the assumption that good will ultimately triumph over evil. Webster defines optimism as "an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and happenings, minimize adverse aspects, conditions, and possibilities, or anticipate the best possible outcome; a cheerful and hopeful temperament." Christian optimism does not ignore nor belittle the disorder and evil which exist in the world. The Christian optimist is not blind to the realities which are found all around him. He freely concedes that things are not as they should be; but, following the lead of Paul, he is willing to postpone sen-

tence upon the facts until the time when an intelligent judgment will be possible. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

The spirit of hopefulness which has just been described was Paul's philosophy of life, and the first section of our lesson text for today was intended to illustrate it. This is made certain by the term "for" which connects the closing part of 2 Cor. 4 with the first part of 2 Cor. 5. The apostle was not primarily concerned with the continuation of his fleshly body—"the earthly house of our tabernacle" (cf. Phil. 1: 19-26); his primary aim was to receive that "building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." And so, with this kind of attitude, the things which are seen, whether pleasant or unpleasant, were only for the moment; that which really counts could not be seen with the natural eye, for it was anchored to the future. (Cf. Rom. 8: 24, 25.)

This hopeful outlook was not confined to Paul and the early Christians, but is the common lot of all faithful followers of Christ. Those who are filled with this Christian optimism are, by their faith and consequent life, continuously bearing witness to the power and grace of God which are theirs in both

good times and bad. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3, 4.) They are full of hope, when situations seem hopeless; for it is then that they are compelled to draw upon the spiritual resources of the Christian faith. Christian optimism is not merely wishful thinking or an effort to escape the reality of conditions as they are. It is, rather, the facing of unpleasant and evil situations with courage and hopefulness, because of the knowledge ("we know") which belongs to Christians through their faith in Jesus. (Cf. Heb. 6: 19, 20.)

For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life.

The kind of "groaning" mentioned here by Paul was also referred to by him in Romans 8: 18-23. It all came about as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27.)

It has already been pointed out that Paul did not object to suffering for the cause of Christ, but it is a fact, expressed by him often, that he longed to go and be with Jesus. Lipscomb notes that "Christians are waiting for the redemption of their bodies from mortality and suffering. Their redemption in Christ will not be completed until their bodies are raised from the dead and glorified

and are become like Jesus in his glorified and immortal state. Paul has in these verses (Rom. 8: 18-23) presented to us the far-reaching and appalling results of sin, and has given us a picture of the future glorious state that shall come to men and earth when the deliverance from sin is completed. The earth will rejoice and be glad as well as man." Paul's language in the verses just quoted may be regarded as an inspired commentary on the portion of the lesson text now under consideration. The "naked" state to which the apostle refers is to that of the disembodied spirit. Paul did not want to be found in that condition, but rather with the body which God has for his glorified people.

God's Plan and Its Consequences

(2 Cor. 5: 5-8)

Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

This is to say that the longing for the heavenly state, along with the heavenly body, was not a groundless desire; for we are placed in that position by God himself.

Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

The confidence which Paul expresses in the verses just quoted is a continuation of that voiced in verse 1 of our lesson text. He understood God's will and intention regarding his people, and possessing the Spirit as a guarantee of the fulfillment of all the promises which he had made to his children, the apostle had every reason to be confident of the future. To be "at home in the body" is to be alive in the flesh; and that, in turn, means to be absent from the Lord in the glorified state. (Read again Phil. 1: 21-24.) The parenthetical statement of verse 7 is rendered by Williams in these words: "For here I live by what I believe and not by what I see." The two "elements" which make up our faith are *conviction* and *confidence*; and when people walk by faith, they

are convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures of the reality of things not seen, and they have confidence regarding the truthfulness of that which God has said about them. (Rom. 10: 17; Heb. 11: 1, 6.)

The Solemn Convictions Which Impelled Paul's Ministry

(2 Cor. 5: 9-11)

Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Verses 9, 10 are rendered by Phillips in this way: "It is our aim, therefore, to please him, whether we are 'at home' or 'away.' For every one of us will have to stand without pretense before Christ our judge, and we shall be rewarded for what we did when we lived in our bodies, whether it was good or bad." It is said that someone once asked Daniel Webster what we the most solemn thought which ever enter his mind, and he promptly replied by saying, "The fact that I must stand in the presence of God and be judged for that which I do while here upon the earth." When people are properly informed regarding the truth of a proposition, there are few things which will affect their standing before God more than the motives which prompt their actions. Consider the following: "Men are more accountable for their motives, than for anything else." (Archibald Alexander.) "In the eyes of that Supreme Being to whom our whole internal frame is uncovered, motives and dispositions hold the place of action." (Hugh Blair.) Anyone who will read Matthew 5: 27, 28; 1 John 3: 15 will be able to see how the Lord regards motives.

These things should enable us to see why Paul attached so much importance to the question of motives. He was convinced that all men must stand in the presence of God and be judged according to their lives while here upon the earth; and with that truth ever before him, he made it his aim to please God. The marginal reading of "make it our aim"

is we *are ambitious*. (Cf. Rom. 15: 20; 1 Thess. 4: 11, the only other places in the New Testament where the original word is found.) Vincent says that the correct sense of the term is "to prosecute as a point of honor." Paul loved the honorable, and what he said here was particularly appropriate as he made his defense of his ministry. That which he said justified his action, and it should have been a warning to his enemies; for when all men have such a motive before them, they cannot remain separated in their teaching and practice for long.

The word "for" connects verses 9 and 10, and it is easy to see that the fact of the judgment is sufficiently potent to cause any person who "loves the honorable" to make every effort to please God. Some one has called the idea of a judgment the first principle of religion. It is involved in both revelation and conscience. The Old Testament conception of Jehovah as Judge is affirmed over and over again; but it is only when we turn to the New Testament that the essence of the question is fully made known. (Acts 17: 30, 31.) Thus not only does the New Testament reaffirm the doctrine of a final judgment; it also unfolds the principle of it, which is summed up in Christ. (John 5: 22, 23.) But this judge is unlike any other who ever sat upon a judgment-seat; for he is both Judge and the Standard of Judgment, and his authority and his law are one.

Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences.

In commenting on this verse, McGarvey and Pendleton make this observation; "Knowing therefore what reason there is to fear displeasing God, we do not court his displeasure by abandoning our ministry because men misjudge and slander us, nor by letting our ministry lose its force and power through our indifference to the good opinion of men concerning us; but, on the contrary, we continue in our ministry, and patiently persuade our opponents of our sincerity and integrity when we assert (verse 9) that

our sole ambition is to please God. But we do not need to persuade God in this matter, for our hearts are known and manifest to him, and I trust that they are also in like manner manifest to you by reason of

this apology which you have caused me to make." The truth and a good conscience are powerful weapons in opposing error; and it is always proper to try to persuade men, for there is indeed a great day coming.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what way is hope related to the over-all teaching of the Scriptures?

Why is hope such an important subject?

What is indicated in one's life by a lack of hope?

Why can't a person please God without hope?

What are the principal ingredients of hope?

Discuss the foot-meaning of the term "hope"?

Why does hope have such a transforming influence on its possessor?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?

What did Paul's faith always do for him?

What was one of the principal secrets of Paul's amazing victory in his service for Christ?

Why is it that the spirit thrives as the flesh continues to wane?

Discuss the process by which this is accomplished?

Why did the apostle Paul always have such an optimistic outlook on life?

The Basis of Our Hope for the Future

What reason did Paul assign for his hopeful outlook?

What is the principal basis for optimism?

How is it possible for a Christian to maintain optimism in a wicked world?

What was Paul's philosophy of life and the ground for it?

What was his primary aim in life?

Discuss the effect of Christian optimism on those about the Lord's people.

What, in reality, is Christian optimism?

What was the "groaning" which Paul mentions in this section of the lesson text?

What brought it on?

Show how the apostle himself explained the situation which he mentions in this portion of the lesson text.

What was the naked state to which he referred?

God's Plan and Its Consequences

How did Paul come to feel as he did about this world and the world to come?

What is the meaning of being "at home in the body"?

What does it mean for one to live by faith?

What are the two elements of faith?

The Solemn Convictions Which Impelled Paul's Ministry?

What were the convictions which impelled Paul's ministry?

What is the place and purpose of motives in the lives of the Lord's people?

What is the force of the word "for" which connects verses 9 and 10?

What is the teaching of the Scriptures regarding a final day of judgment?

What effect does faith in such a judgment have on its possessors?

Discuss the nature and purpose of the judgment at the last day.

In what way did Paul sum up his teaching in the text of today's lesson?

Lesson X—September 8, 1968

THE GRACE OF GIVING

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 9: 1-11

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2 For I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Mac-e-do'-ni-a, that A-cha'-ia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them.

3 But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared:

4 Lest by any means, if there come with me any of Mac-e-do'-ni-a and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence.

5 I thought it necessary therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

6 But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly;

and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

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

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

9 As it is written,

He hath scattered abroad, he

hath given to the poor;
His righteousness abideth for ever.

10 And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:

11 Ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20: 35.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Cor. 16: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

September 2. M..... Give As Prospered (1 Cor: 16: 1, 2)
September 3. T..... Christ's Example (Matt. 20: 20-28)
September 4. W..... No Love in Covetous Heart (1 John 3: 13-21)
September 5. T..... Faith without Works Dead (James 2: 14-18)
September 6. F..... Example of Benevolence (Acts 11: 27-30)
September 7. S..... Church Charged (1 Tim. 5: 1-16)
September 8. S..... Pure and Undeified Religion (James 1: 19-27)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Somewhere in Macedonia.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

When Paul needed someone to stir up the Corinthian church regarding the contribution which they had promised to make for their Jewish brethren in Judaea, he turned to Titus, and Titus gladly responded to the call. "But thanks be to God, who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he accepted indeed our exhortation; but being himself very earnest, he went forth unto you of his own accord." (2 Cor. 8: 16, 17.) There is every reason for thinking that when Titus had finished his task, Paul could say, "I was not put to shame." Paul gave Titus and the brother who went with him a very encouraging report concerning the Corinthians, and he was therefore very anxious that the brethren live up to that report.

Giving on the first day of the week is a direct command of the Lord to his people. (1 Cor. 16: 2.) No informed Bible student would contend that that is all the giving which Christians may or should engage in; but it is that which they should do when they meet on the Lord's day for worship. The pas-

sage just referred to contains Paul's instruction regarding the Lord's day collection, which in this instance was for the poor saints in Judaea, and the reason for it; while the eighth and ninth chapters of Second Corinthians set forth the principles which should govern the Lord's people in carrying out this command.

The importance of this subject cannot be too greatly emphasized; for no one can please the Lord who does not endeavor to follow all the instruction which is given in God's will to his people. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) The purpose of this lesson is to point out the principles which should govern Christians in their giving on the first day of the week. Webster defines a principle, as used in this study, as a settled rule of action; a governing law of conduct; a rule of conduct consistently directing one's actions. The New Testament principles of giving, if faithfully followed, will solve the problem of "church finances" and render that feature of Christian service acceptable to God.

The Golden Text

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" These words form the closing part of Paul's address to the Ephesian elders. He was bringing to a close his third missionary journey, and was hurrying to Jerusalem with the funds which had been collected by the churches of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and probably Asia, for the relief of the poor saints in and around Jerusalem. The apostle wanted to reach Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. He, of course, wanted to see the Ephesian elders with whom he had worked so long; but inasmuch as their city was off of his route, and in order to save time, he asked the elders there to meet him in Miletus. It was at the latter place that Paul delivered the address to the Ephesian elders which closed with the words of our golden text for today.

We have no way of knowing from what source Paul learned of the words of Jesus which he quoted; but we do know that he rescued them from oblivion, and made it possible for them to be available for use by the Lord's people in all subsequent ages of the world. It is also interesting to note that Paul is the only apostle or other inspired writer, outside the four gospel records, who ever made a direct quotation from the Lord; and David Thomas calls attention to three important things which the words reveal regarding Christ and his teaching

namely, (1) The unrecorded portion of his words, which is to say that much of the teaching of the Lord was not recorded. (John 10: 30, 31; 21: 25.) (2) The exalted character of his teaching, standing as it does, in direct contrast with that of the world. (3) The unselfish nature of his life; for the words quoted are but a portrayal of his life.

There are in general two principal views of life, namely, (1) that of gain, and (2) that of service to others. Gain, of course, can be with a view to helping others, but that is not the usual attitude of those whose aim is the acquisition of that which they do not possess. Many people whose desire is to acquire that which they do not possess not only want their gains for themselves, but also for use in making further acquisitions. But the other view aims to use every gift and every opportunity in such a manner as to make them blessings to others. Paul's purpose in quoting the words of Jesus to the Ephesian elders was to encourage them to follow his example of service to their fellow man. That had always been Paul's rule as a Christian; and in following that plan, he was but imitating the example and teaching of Jesus. (Cf. Matt. 20: 28; 1 Thess. 2: 7-9.) The joy of acquisition for self can never equal the satisfaction of serving others.

The Text Explained

Confidence Does Not Preclude Precautionary Measures

(2 Cor. 9: 1-5)

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know your readiness, of which I glory on your behalf to them of Macedonia, that Achaia hath been prepared for a year past; and your zeal hath stirred up very many of them. But I have sent the brethren, that our glorying on your behalf may not be made void in this respect; that, even as I said, ye may be prepared: lest by any means, if there come with me any of Macedonia and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be put to shame in this confidence. I thought it necessary

therefore to entreat the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your aforepromised bounty, that the same might be ready as a matter of bounty, and not of extortion.

There appears to be a very close connection between the closing verse of chapter eight, and the opening verse of chapter nine. After exhorting the Corinthian brethren to show the brethren whom he was sending to them "the proof of your love, and of our glorying on your behalf," Paul then reminds the Corinthians that there was really no need to write to them regarding the matter in question; but, as Robertson notes, "all the same he does write," and then points

out that the writing "ought to be superfluous." Meyer observes that "certainly Paul has written of the collection both in chapter 8 and again in what follows; and he *meant* it so, otherwise he would have ended the section with chapter 8. But he delicately makes a rhetorical turn, so that, in order to spare the readers' sense of honor, he seems not to take up the *subject* again, but to speak only of the *sending of the brethren*; and he annexes to that what he intends still to insert regarding *the matter itself*. . . . Probably when he wrote 8: 24 he meant to close the section with it, but—perhaps after reading over chapter 8 again—was induced to add something, which he did in this polite fashion. Hofmann's idea—that *recommendation of the collection itself* was superfluous, but that there had been delay in *carrying* it out—is quite in accordance certainly with verses 1-5, but from verse 5 to the end of the chapter there again follow instructions and promises, which belong essentially to the recommendation of the collection itself."

But to say the least of it, Paul did, in a very delicate manner, remind the Corinthian brethren of their lagging responsibility regarding a promise which they had made, but had not showed the interest in it which should have characterized them; while at the same time assuring them that he still had confidence in them. And the fact that he was sending Titus and others to encourage them to complete the work of gathering the offering was, indeed, to their advantage, as well as to his. The motive behind Paul's statement is brought out in Calvin's paraphrase; "I do not tell you that you must minister unto the necessities of the saints; for that were needless; since you well know it, and have practically declared that you would not be wanting to them; but because of my everywhere boasting of your liberality, I have engaged at once my own credit and yours, this will not suffer me to remain inactive."

If we keep in mind the "break" between Paul and the Corinthian church, which necessitated the "painful letter," it will be easier to understand why Paul, after the rec-

onciliation, had to pick up the "broken threads" and skillfully reweave the pattern which characterized the Corinthians when the pledge was first made "a year past." This appears to be the significance of verses 1-5, and it should be a lesson to us in dealing with similar situations which occasionally arise in our time. It is much better to rebuild the bridge, than to widen the chasm.

Reaping Will Be in Proportion to the Sowing (2 Cor. 9: 6-9)

But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work; as it is written,

*He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor;
His righteousness abideth for ever.*

When one carefully considers the teaching of the New Testament with reference to giving, he will learn that there are some specific motives which should govern Christians in this phase of their service in the Lord's kingdom. (1) The first and highest motive is *the desire to obey God*. (Matt. 7: 21; James 2: 10; 4: 17.) (2) *As a means of spiritual development*. The giving which the Lord requires is intended as a means of growth and development. Giving up material things in the proper spirit will always result in spiritual growth and spiritual riches. No motive therefore should ever be put before a Christian to induce him to give which would not develop him spiritually, and leave him richer for the giving. (3) *As a proof of love*. (2 Cor. 8: 8, 9, 24; John 14: 21; 1 John 5: 3.) (4) *To provide means for carrying on the work which the Lord has ordained for his people to do*. (1 Cor. 9: 13, 14; 16: 2.)

As in practically all other instances of doing that which the Lord commands, there is a right way to act and a wrong way. It is impor-

tant for us to know this in the matter now under consideration; because the inspired writers of the New Testament gave some specific instructions regarding it. God has always been definite in his instructions to those who worship and serve him. (Cf. John 4: 24.) We know exactly what to do with reference to "church music," eating the Lord's supper, et cetera; and we can know what the Lord wants done with respect to giving too.

When we come to consider the question from the negative standpoint, we are told that we must not give (1) *grudgingly*, that is, of sorrow (marginal note) or out of grief, "with a sour, reluctant mind." (Thayer.) (Deut. 15: 9, 10; 1 John 5: 3.) (2) *Of necessity*, that is, compelled to give. (3) *Of extortion*, that is, a gift which betrays the giver's covetousness. A covetous man is one who possesses an avaricious spirit, one who has a greedy desire for more, usually at someone else's expense. (Cf. Col. 3: 5; Gal. 5: 20.) The desire to possess that to which one has no right is not only covetousness; it is robbery as well. (Mai. 3: 7-10.) A Christian therefore should never try to hold on to, as long as he can, that which should be given in the Lord's service. On the contrary, he should be thankful for the opportunity of doing that which he is able to do.

Turning next to the positive side of the question, there are some principles stated which, if followed, will certainly result in the accomplishment of that which the Lord has authorized. (1) *Give as prospered*, that is, according to one's gain. (1 Cor. 16: 2.) This is to be done weekly; and if this plan is carried out, no great burden will be felt at any one time. This is what Paul meant when he told the Corinthians to give according to their ability. (2 Cor. 8: 11; cf. Mark 14: 8; 12: 41-44.) (2) *Stewardship giving*. A steward is one who manages that which belongs to another; and since the Christian and all his possessions belong to God, he must, if he is faithful, give as a steward. (Luke 16: 10-13; 1 Pet. 4: 10; 1 Cor. 4: 2.)

(3) *Give cheerfully*, that is, be prompt, cheerful, and joyous in giving. (Rom. 12: 8; Acts 4: 32.) No one, let it be emphasized again,

should try to hold on to that which he should give as long as he can. Our giving should should be done *weekly*, not "weakly." (4) *Give readily*, that is, in a zealous, eager spirit, or with a ready mind. (2 Cor. 8: 11, 12.) This is about the same as giving cheerfully. (5) *Abound in giving*, that is, be pre-eminent or excel in giving. (2 Cor. 8: 7.) (6) *Give with a purpose*, that is, have an aim in mind and resolve to discharge the obligation growing out of it. (2 Cor. 9: 7.) The giving which God requires must result from *settled convictions* and a *determined purpose*; not from an *occasional impulse*. There is no place for purposeless and spasmodic giving in the service of Christ.

(7) *Promised or pledged giving*—"your aforepromised bounty." (2 Cor. 9: 5.) That Christians should assume a definite obligation, and pledge themselves to discharge that obligation, is the plain implication of the passage just cited. The promise or pledge which the Corinthians made had been before them for a year. (2 Cor. 8: 10; 9: 2.) (8) *Equality in giving*, that is, on the principle that the abundance of the one should be made to equalize the difference created by the wants of others. (2 Cor. 8: 13, 14.) This is the spirit of the Golden Rule; and that rule is applicable in the entire life of a Christian—"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Matt. 7: 12.) The abundant possessions of the one and the needs of others present a problem, the solution of which not only involves human duty, but human destiny as well. (Gal. 6: 2; 1 John 3: 17; Matt. 25; 31-46.)

In commenting on verse 8 of the section of the lesson text now before us, David Lipscomb says, "This as clearly teaches as any passage in the Old Testament that God bestows temporal blessings under the new dispensation as well as spiritual, and that he does it in response to a free and hearty consecration to the Lord on our part. All grace here is favor in temporal good, that the Christian having all sufficiency may abound unto every good work. To the Philippians, Paul says: I have all things,

and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.' (Phil. 4: 18, 19.)

"In these things it may be asked: 'Does God violate his laws to bless his children?' Nay, I do not believe God violates his laws to do anything. But his laws are multiform and far-reaching. One law acting alone might produce one result, another law working in harmony with it would greatly modify that result. A law working without prayer or a life of consecration on our part might produce one result, acting in harmony with the influence growing out of prayer and self-sacrifice to God and that result is greatly modified. The prayer and consecration so harmonize with all the laws of God that the working of every law bears blessings to him who prays and consecrates himself to God."

Paul's quotation in verse 9 from Psalm 112: 9 not only confirms the truth that God does give temporal blessings to his people in this dispensation, who are willing to conform to his law of sowing and reaping; it also shows that God himself works in harmony with the principle stated in verse 6 of the passage now under consideration, that is, God sows bountifully, and the result is that his faithful children are able to reap in the same manner. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6.)

God Will Bless Liberal Giving (2 Cor. 9: 10, 11)

And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.

The original word from which we have "liberality" (*haplotēs*) literally means singleness of heart (cf. Col. 3: 22), sincerity, mental honesty. Our giving, according to this rule, should be with openness of heart and honesty of mind; not feigning, that is shutting the eyes or feigning ignorance of what is being

done when our giving is not what it should be. Liberal giving not only "filleth up the measure of the wants of the saints," or meets whatever other need which may be before the church, "but aboundeth also through many thanksgivings unto God." (2 Cor. 9: 12.) This is one way we have of glorifying God for the obedience of our confession unto the gospel of Christ. (See verse 13.) God will as certainly supply that which we will use, as his promise is found in the New Testament. (Cf. 2 Cor. 1: 20.)

The New Testament does not specify a definite amount or percentage which must be given by the Lord's people today, but it does say that "he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Giving under Christ, as already observed, is a test of the giver's love, his love for the Lord and for his fellow men. This, however, does not imply that there is no definite teaching in the New Testament on the question now before us; there is, and "if any man *willeth* to do his will, he shall *know* of [that is, come to recognize] the teaching." (John 7: 17.) Robertson calls this "experimental knowledge from willingness to do God's will," and quotes Westcott as saying, "If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding." All of this adds up to the fact that there must be moral harmony between man's purpose and God's will, as Robertson further points out. Vincent notes that "sympathy with the will of God is a condition of understanding it." The lack of sympathy regarding God's teaching on the subject of giving has doubtless been the major reason why so many professed Christians have failed to recognize his will on the subject.

How sweet, how heav'nly is the sight,
When those that love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
And so fulfill the word.
When each can feel his brother's sigh,
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart.

—J. Swain,

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Who greatly aided Paul in his efforts to raise money for the needy saints in and around Jerusalem?

What was the relationship of Titus to Paul?

What particular reason did Paul have for writing to the Corinthian brethren at this time regarding their contribution for poor saints?

What is the connection between 1 Corinthians 16: 2 and 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9?

What is the primary purpose of the lesson now before us?

Define and discuss the use of the term "principle" in this study.

The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul speak the words of the golden text?

How did Paul know that Jesus spoke the words which he quoted?

What important things do the words reveal regarding Christ and his teaching?

What are the two principal views of life which are in evidence today?

What was Paul's purpose in quoting the words of Jesus to the Ephesian elders?

How do the two views of life just referred to stand related to each other?

Confidence Does Not Preclude Precautionary Measures

In what way do chapters 8 and 9 of Second Corinthians stand related to each other?

What did Paul mean by saying that it was superfluous for him to write to the brethren regarding the contribution for the poor saints?

Why, then, did he go on and write about it anyway?

What motive appears to have prompted Paul to feel and act toward the Corinthians as he did?

What light does the correspondence of Paul with the Corinthian brethren throw on the question now before us?

Why is it better to rebuild the bridge than to widen the chasm?

Reaping Will Be in Proportion to the Sowing

What basic motives should govern Christians in their giving?

Why are Christian people told what not to do, as well as what to do, with reference to giving?

Is it possible for people to know what they should do with reference to their giving? Give reasons for your answer.

What are some of the things which should be avoided in giving?

What are the principles which should govern the Lord's people in their giving?

Discuss briefly each one of the principles contained in the New Testament.

How can any New Testament church be sure of solving its financial problems?

What definite promise has God made to his people in connection with faithful giving?

God Will Bless Liberal Giving

What is the meaning of "liberality"?

Name some results of liberal giving?

What promise has God made to the liberal giver?

What is the teaching of the New Testament with reference to the amount of our giving?

How may we be certain that we understand the will of the Lord in this respect?

Why can't people who are not in sympathy with his teaching understand God's will?

Lesson XI—September 15, 1968

WARNING OF FALSE TEACHERS

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 11: 3-16

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

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Je'-sus, whom we did not preach, or *if* ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with *him*.

5 For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech,

yet *am I* not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made *this* manifest unto you in all things.

7 Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages of *them* that I might minister unto you;

9 And when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Mac-e-do'-ni-a, supplied the measure of my want; and in every thing I kept myself

from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*.

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of A-cha'-ia.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such men are false apostles,

deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light.

15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

16 I say again, Let no man think me foolish; but if *ye do*, yet as foolish receive me, that I also may glory a little.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In later times some shall fall away from the faith."* (1 Tim. 4: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 John 4: 1-4.

Daily Bible Readings

September 9. M.....John Warns of False Teachers (1 John 4: 4-6)
 September 10. T.....Jude Warns of False Teachers (Jude 3-15)
 September 11. W.....Peter Warns of False Teachers (2 Pet. 2: 1-22)
 September 12. T.....Paul Warns of False Teachers (1 Tim. 4: 1-5)
 September 13. F.....Christ Warns of False Teachers (Matt. 7: 15-23)
 September 14. S.....Jehovah Warns of False Teachers (Jer. 23: 16-22)
 September 15. S.....Ezekiel Warns of False Teachers (Ezek. 13: 1-16)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

The question of false teachers has been a major problem with God's people since the day that the devil spoke his lie to Eve in the garden of Eden. This fact can be verified by a simple reading of the Bible itself. A single Old Testament example shall suffice for that part of God's word. "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophecy unto you: they teach you vanity; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah. ... I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I sate not unto them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to ear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." (Jer. 23: 16, 21, 22.)

Jesus dealt with the same problem all during his ministry here upon the earth. As he neared the conclusion of his great sermon on the mount, he warned, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye

shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs or thistles?

Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the ill 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 do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 15-23.)

And the apostle Paul, speaking directly to a group of elders, men who had been authorized by the Holy Spirit to have the oversight of God's people, said, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples

after them." (Acts 20: 28-30.) It was not many years after Paul spoke the words just quoted before he wrote to Timothy regarding that very same church: "As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do I now." (1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.)

God has always depended upon teachers to make known his will to men, but he has always required that those who speak his word be faithful to their trust. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "We waxed bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but even as we have been ap-

proved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts." (1 Thess. 2: 2b-4.) And then to the Galatians he wrote: "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10.)

The Golden Text

"In later times some shall fall away from the faith." 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 Second 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 always fill the heart.

The Text Explained

The Basis of Pauls Fear for the Corinthians' Loyalty

(2 Cor. 11: 3-6)

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive, or a different gospel, which ye did not accept, ye do well to bear with him. For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet am I not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made this manifest unto you in all things.

After the signal defeat of the Judaizing teachers at the Jerusalem conference, they apparently decided to wage the war against their mightiest opponent in the territory where his success had been the greatest, and endeavor to resist him in the very center of his influence—in the very heart of the Gentile churches which he had founded, namely, Corinth and the Galatian churches. Paul therefore was forced to meet the challenge of these false teachers, a thing which caused him much grief; but his loyalty to Christ and his great love for the disciples whom he had won for him left him with no other choice. But the apostle wanted his brethren to know his true feeling toward them, as he warned them of false teachers and their own defection from the truth; and that accounts for his introductory words: "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness: but indeed ye do bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." (Nothing is more tragic than for a bride (or a groom, as for that matter) to prove unfaithful to her husband; but that is a favorite figure which is used to describe the Divine feeling for the spiritual adultery of God's people. (Jer. 13: 25-27; Ezek. 16: 30-34; Rev 2: 20-22; James 4: 4.)

The methods used by the false teachers in their efforts to draw away the disciples after them were

similar to the one employed by the serpent in the garden of Eden when he overcame Eve, namely, deception. The term "craftiness" means cunning, trickery (Luke 20: 23; 1 Cor. 3: 19), and it was in that way that the victim was *beguiled*. To be "corrupted" from the *simplicity* (sincerity) that is toward Christ, is to be led into fundamental doctrinal error. It is an amazing fact that those teachers who work under cover in congregations, with which they had little or nothing to do in establishing, are following the same plan which both the serpent, and the Judaizing teachers employed; and why they can't see it is both astonishing and incredible.

When the first two verses of the text now before us are compared with Galatians 1: 6, 7, it will be seen that the two situations which Paul describes are practically the same. Phillips renders 2 Corinthians 11: 3, 4 in these words: "I am afraid that your minds may be seduced from a singlehearted devotion to him by the same subtle means that the serpent used toward Eve. For apparently you cheerfully accept a man who comes to you preaching a different Jesus, from the one we told you about, and you readily receive a spirit and a gospel quite different from the ones you originally accepted." Now, with those words in mind, read Goodspeed's translation of Galatians 1: 6, 7: "I am amazed that you are so quickly turning away from him who called you by the mercy of Christ, to some different good news—not that there is any other, only that there are some who are trying to unsettle you and want you to turn the good news of Christ around." In both instances the Judaizing zealots were endeavoring to turn the Gentile converts from their undivided loyalty to Christ to a system of teaching which, in a very real sense, rendered the unadulterated gospel null and void. Christ will not countenance any change whatsoever in that which he has commanded. (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

But the Judaizers and present-day hobby riders among us are not the only false teachers who thus deal with the word of the Lord,

Practically all denominational preachers do not hesitate to try to twist the gospel plan of salvation around, so as to make it seem that baptism has no place in the scheme of human redemption. For example, Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." (Mark 16: 15, 16.) But some preachers say, "He that believeth is saved. He may be baptized later, if he so desires and would like to become a church member; but he is saved before and without water baptism." Any person who wants to can easily see that the latter teaching makes the language of Jesus void (Matt. 15: 6; Mark 7: 6-9). John says, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not in God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

When Paul wrote the words of the text now under consideration, he was dealing with a fundamental error, namely, that of altering the inspired message of the Lord. Therefore both the teachers and the taught come under his condemnation, that is, when the taught accept the erroneous instruction of the teachers. The church in Corinth had departed from the truth, and nothing short of a change of mind on their part would enable them to return to their original purity. That was why Paul was writing to the church as such, rather than to the false teachers. "For though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it: though I did regret it (for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though but for a season), I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea

what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! *In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter.*" (2 Cor. 7: 8-11.) The statement just quoted shows the results which Paul's "sorrowful letter" accomplished.

Verses 5, 6 of this section of the lesson text are an obvious reference to the charges which Paul's enemies made against him. (2 Cor. 10: 10.) The "chiefest apostles" were not the genuine apostles of Christ (Gal. 2: 9), but the "sham apostles" who opposed Paul. Paul's reference to them is ironical. Farrar call them "the extra-super apostles." Phillips translates verses 5, 6 in these words: "Yet I cannot believe I am in the least inferior to these extraspecial messengers of yours. Perhaps I am not a polished speaker, but I do know what I am talking about, and both what I am and what I say is pretty familiar to you."

Paul's Reason for Not Accepting Pay from the Corinthians

(2 Cor. 11: 7-12)

Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them that I might minister unto you; and when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on any man; for the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want; and in everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this glorying in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire an occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

Paul's question, "Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nought?" is ironical in its nature, as in indeed a major part of Second Corinthians, chapters 10-13. In commenting on this section of the lesson text, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* makes the following ob-

servations, Paul fully recognized God's law which holds that "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10: 7; 1 Tim. 5: 18); for he had already given a clear exposition of this principle in 1 Cor. 9: 1-14, as it applies to gospel preachers. It was on the basis of this law that he had, more than once, accepted support from the generous church in Philippi (Phil. 4: 15, 16); but that was not his usual practice (1 Thess. 2: 9; Acts 18: 1-3; 20: 34, 35).

This policy of Paul's was clearly different from his opponents in Corinth; for they did take pay from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9: 12), and it appears that they prided themselves in doing so, since that was the privilege of "apostles." But Paul had fully made up his mind that it could never be truly said of him that he was a hireling teacher; and he very carefully stated his reason for that attitude. (1 Cor. 9: 15-23; Gen. 14: 21-24.) But this honorable independence on Paul's part created a difficulty which operated in two directions, namely, (1) it gave his opponents an excuse for saying that Paul knew that he was not of apostolic rank (1 Cor. 9: 1, 2), and was unwilling therefore to accept money on that basis; and (2) it apparently injured the feelings of the Corinthian brethren, in that it seemed to imply that they were inferior to other churches which supported him (2 Cor. 12: 13).

Paul's reply to these charges and implications is made in the language of the text which is now before us, in verses 7-12. He says that his action was necessary, in order to silence his opponents; for if he permitted them to have such an occasion, the result would be that he could be brought down to their level. (2 Cor. 12: 14.) That "they may be found even as we" probably means, according to Alford, that there may be no extraneous or casual comparisons made between us arising out of misrepresentations of my course of procedure among you; but that in every matter of boasting we may be fairly compared and judged by facts.

A True Appraisal of Paul's Enemies

(2 Cor. 11: 13-16)

For such men are false apostles deceitful workers, fashioning them-

selves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

One of the facts of early church history was the speedy appearance of false teachers, as may be seen by reading such passages as Gal. 2: 4; Phil. 1: 15; 3: 18; Tit. 1: 10; 2 Pet. 2: 1; 1 John 4: 1. Jesus warned of this condition while he was here upon the earth, as we have already seen from a quotation in the Sermon on the Mount. The great tragedy which grew out of the work of false teachers was the corruption of and departure from the truth of the Lord's people; and that, in the estimate of Christ and the apostles, deserved total destruction on the part of such teachers. It is a fact, worthy of special notice, that neither Jesus nor his apostles ever showed the slightest sympathy for, or in any way sought to excuse such men. (Matt. 23: 15; Gal. 1: 6-9; 5: 12; 2 Pet. 2: 3; Jude 12, 13.)

Paul in the passage now under consideration, clearly identifies the Judaizing teachers in Corinth as "false apostles" (Gal. 2: 3-5); and they were the ones concerning whom he said that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest" of them. Such men are not interested in the glory of God and the edification of God's people, but are bent on having their own way. They are further described in these words by Paul: "For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." (Phil. 3: 18, 19.) In the language of the text now before us, they are ministers of Satan, notwithstanding the fact that they endeavor to make it appear that they are ministers of righteousness. False teachers have no place in the economy of Christ, and it is certain that he expects his people to keep that fact in mind and act accordingly. (2 John 10, 11.)

I say again, Let no man think me

foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I also may glory a little.

This verse should be read in the light of verse 1 of the chapter now under consideration. The Corinthians had permitted the "false apostles" to boast of their position

and abilities, and now Paul asks for the same privilege. He really had something to tell the Corinthians, and the practical meaning of his statement is this: Whatever you think of me personally, you had better listen to that which I have to say to you. (2 Cor. 10: 7-12.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are the facts regarding false teachers among God's people?
Cite examples of the manner in which they were dealt with in both Testaments.
What did Jesus and Paul say about such teachers?
What is the place of teachers in the Divine economy?

The Golden Text

In what "thought pattern" were the words of the golden text written?
What may the Lord's people expect regarding departures from the truth?
What period is meant by "later times"?

The Basis of Paul's Fear for the Corinthians' Loyalty

Why were the Judaizing teachers such inveterate enemies of Paul?
Where did they decide to make their strongest attack against him and why?
In what way did the apostle make known his feelings toward the Corinthian brethren?
Why is the figure of adultery used to describe the unfaithfulness of the Lord's people?
What method did the false teachers in Corinth employ?
How do many modern-day false teachers operate? Cite some examples.
What was the aim of the Judaizing teachers with reference to the converts of Paul?
How wide-spread are the efforts which are

being made to turn people away from Christ?

What will happen to people who do not abide in the teaching of Jesus and inspired men?

Why did Paul address his teaching to the church, rather than to the false teachers?

Who were the "chiefest apostles" to whom Paul referred?

Paul's Reason for Not Accepting Pay from the Corinthians

Was it improper for Paul to accept financial remuneration for his services as a gospel preacher?
Why then, did he refuse support from the Corinthians?
What is the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the financial support of gospel preachers?

A True Appraisal of Paul's Enemies

What do the facts of early church history show with reference to false teachers?
What was the attitude of Jesus and his apostles toward such people?
Why do false teachers deserve total destruction?
Did Jesus and his apostles ever pray for those who divided his followers and led his people into error? Give reasons for your answer.
With whom did Paul identify the false teachers in Corinth?
How did he describe these men in his letter to the Philippians?
How does he describe them in the language of the text now under consideration?
What privilege did Paul ask of the Corinthians?
What warning did he give them?

Lesson XII—September 22, 1968

REMARKABLE EXPERIENCES

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 12: 1-10

1 I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven.

3 And I know such a man (wheth-

er in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth),

4 How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 On behalf of such a one will I glory: but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in *my* weaknesses.

6 For if I should desire to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I shall speak the truth: but I forbear, lest any man should account of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or heareth from me.

7 And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch.

8 Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for *my* power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"My grace is sufficient for thee."* (2 Cor. 12: 9.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 1: 11-24.

Daily Bible Readings

September 16. M..... Paul's Labors and Sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 16-28)
September 17. T.....No Claim of Earthly Fame (Phil. 3: 1-6)
September 18. W..... Sacrifice of Fleshly Honors (Phil. 3: 7-16)
September 19. T.....Paul's Ultimate Crown (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
September 20. F.....Vision of Cornelius (Acts 10: 1-8)
September 21. S..... Vision of Peter (Acts 10: 9-23)
September 22. S.....Transfiguration Experiences (Matt. 17: 1-9)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Looking at the matter from the purely human point of view, it seems a shame that Paul had to employ so much of his time and energy in defending himself and his work as a minister of Christ; but when we take into account the fact of human nature and man's proneness to sin, it is, of course, a blessing that we have Paul's writings on record. Many of the problems which affect churches today are much more easily solved when careful attention is given to that which Paul wrote, along with other records found in the New Testament. Jesus does not want a single individual lost (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Peter 3: 9), and we should therefore be grateful for everything which is found in the New Testament regarding human relationships, and the Lord's plan for bringing the erring and rebellious to repentance.

And furthermore, it is doubtful if a more representative church could be found which would bring out more forcefully the various aspects involved in the corruption and reclamation of Christian personality, than the church in Corinth.

Judging from the information which we have, that church must have been full of strenuous people—decided individuals, eager for all that which the gospel had to give them in the way of gifts and endowments, rights and hopes. This has been a blessing to us too; for it called forth all of Paul's resources of intuition and explanation, supervised by the Holy Spirit, and in the end immensely enriched the literature of the Christian religion. It is true that the Corinthians sometimes tried Paul's patience to the breaking point, as in the case now under study; but even that led to richer and fuller disclosures of religious truth on his part, and revealed the great apostle himself, along with his motives and methods, as no other of his letters do. We should therefore be extremely thankful for the epistles which Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians.

Practically by entire contents of the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians, as has already been pointed out, are given to Paul's defense of his apostolic office and authority. Paul never stayed at any

place very long at a time, and that fact gave his enemies the opportunity of entering into his places of labor among the Gentiles, and sowing the seed of discord. These Judaizing teachers did not consider Paul as a genuine apostle, and that, of course, meant that they regarded his preaching as being both spurious and dangerous. After their signal defeat at the Jerusalem conference, they made a concentrated effort to

overthrow Paul's work wherever they could gain a foothold. This great fight led Paul to write some of the most valuable information regarding the ways and means of convicting erring brethren of sin, and leading them to repentance, which we have on record. The lesson before us today is a continuation of Paul's defense which we have been considering in the two previous chapters.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

Further Grounds for Glorifying

(2 Cor. 12: 1-5)

I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Paul, in the previous chapter, explained to the Corinthians that glorifying or boasting was foolish, but they and the Judaizers had forced him into it. Here he repeats the same thing, and adds that it is not "expedient," that is, it is not profitable; but since the situation was such as it is, he would have to go with it. However, instead of glorifying in his weaknesses, he proposed to come to that which had to do with the miraculous. The fact that these visions and revelations had been vouchsafed to him, was evidence, in and of itself, that he was acceptable to God. (Cf. Acts 5: 32.)

I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. On behalf of such a one will I glory; but on mine own behalf I will not glory, save in my weaknesses.

Although Paul speaks of "a man in Christ" as if it were some other person, it is generally understood that he was speaking of himself. The reason why he did not refer to himself directly was probably be-

cause of the nature of the experience, and because of his own humility. John followed this course in the writing of his gospel record. This last named apostle enjoyed a very close relationship with Jesus, and it was probably because of his modesty, as well as to forestall any charge that he was exploiting his great privilege, that he refrained from recording his own name in connection with the life of Jesus which he wrote. If Paul had related the facts which he names here as a personal experience, the probability is that he would have been accused of being proud, and would probably have excited the envy or ill-will of others. There are, however, two strong reasons for thinking that the apostle referred to himself, namely, (1) the trend of his arguments requires that he mention something which had happened to him, and (2) he applies the experience to himself in verse 7.

While the experience which is related in the text now under consideration was unquestionably Paul's, he says that he did not know just how it happened, that is, whether both his spirit and his body were involved, or whether only his spirit was at the place of the visions and revelations. The fact that Paul was "caught" up to the third heaven indicates that he was suddenly seized and transported to the celestial realm by miraculous power. (Cf. Acts 8: 39; 1 Thess. 4: 17; Rev. 12: 5, where the same original word is used.) The time of these visions and revelations is given as fourteen years before Paul wrote the letter we are now studying to the Corin-

thians. If Paul wrote in A. D. 57, as is generally understood, then the visions and revelations took place in A. D. 43, which may have been during the latter part of his stay in Tarsus, or the first part of his stay in Antioch. (See Acts 9: 26-30; 11: 25, 26; cf. Alford, Meyer, et al, *in loco*.) The Lord had selected Paul for a work which would involve persecutions and sufferings (Acts 9: 15, 16), and it is very probable that the visions and revelations which came to him at the time here mentioned were intended to strengthen him for the tasks and trials which were before him. J. W. Shepherd notes that the experience "certainly braced him for the whole heroic career of unparalleled success which lay before him as a herald of the cross."

It appears that Paul uses the expressions "third heaven" and "Paradise" interchangeably. Many of the Jews spoke of three heavens, and that idea has a scriptural basis. The first heaven, according to this view, is the space above where the birds fly (Luke 9: 58); the second, where the sun, moon, and stars are (Psalm 19: 1-6; Gen. 1: 14-18; Judges 5: 20); while the third heaven is where God is (Deut. 4: 39). If the third heaven and Paradise are used synonymously, then Paradise evidently has reference to the basic idea of blessedness. The word occurs only three times in the entire New Testament (Luke 23: 43; 2 Cor. 12: 4; Rev. 2: 7); and while Luke 23: 43 evidently refers to the intermediate state or dwelling-place of the dead, between death and the resurrection (cf. Acts 2: 27), it is certain that Revelation 2: 7 has reference to the dwelling-place of God. The marginal reading for "Paradise" in the latter passage is *garden*, as in Genesis 2: 8; and it appears quite evident that the thought in the mind of Jesus was that of a restored Eden or a garden of delights. Harper's Bible Dictionary notes that this use of Paradise to mean heaven has become common in the language of Christian devotion.

The message which Paul heard in heaven is described as "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The original term for "unspeakable" is *arrhētos* and

literally means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, inexpressible, that is, something beyond the power of human ability to utter, being "words too sacred to tell." The English "unspeakable" occurs three times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 9: 15; 12: 4; 1 Pet. 1: 8), but in each instance there is a different original word, which is found nowhere else in the New Testament. The term "unlawful" is used in the sense of not being authorized or permitted to speak. (Cf. Matt. 12: 1-12, where the same original word is found in verses 2, 4, 10, 12.) If Paul had been authorized by the Lord to speak the words which he heard in Paradise, he could, of course, have uttered them (cf. Acts 2: 4; 2 Pet. 1: 21); but in the absence of such authority, he was neither permitted nor able to speak those things which he had heard.

Paul is apparently the only man who ever went to heaven, and then came back to the earth, and was privileged to give important information, though of course different from the visions and revelations of this lesson, regarding the world of eternal bliss. If there is an exception to this, it would be John, following the Revelation which was made through him. Elijah was taken to heaven, and came back to the mount of transfiguration; but there is no indication that he imparted any information about heaven to any one on the earth. If any one should wonder why Paul was not permitted to disclose that which he had heard in heaven, it should be remembered that the Lord has not revealed all the reasons for his actions (cf. Deut. 29: 29; Rom. 11: 33-36), and, furthermore, he wants his people to learn to walk by faith, rather than by sight (2 Cor. 5: 7; cf. 1 Cor. 1: 21; Rom. 1: 16, 17).

Practically any one would concede that Paul could justly glory on behalf of a person who had had such an experience as he has described; but since Paul was speaking of that in the third person, his aim was to keep himself, as the Corinthians knew him, out of view. The only things which he was willing to boast about, which were admittedly his, were his weaknesses, that is, the things which his enemies considered his weaknesses. If he had been

strong, as they viewed the matter, those persecutions and other sources of grief would not have had a place in his life. It will be remembered that Job's three friends, who came to comfort him in his distress, felt the same way about that great man. (Cf. Job 2: 11-13; 4: 7; 8: 20.)

A Word of Explanation

(2 Cor. 11: 6)

For if I should desire to glory, I shall not be foolish; for I shall speak the truth: but I forbear, lest any man should account of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me.

It appears from this section of the lesson text that Paul was telling the Corinthians that if he should decide to boast, that is, should actually glory with reference to his experiences and accomplishments, that he would have ample grounds for doing so, and that he could name instances which would merit such praise. It would not be necessary for him to resort to imaginary cases, but that he could relate many wonderful experiences, while remaining within the confines of truth. However, Paul explains his reason for not glorying with regard to his own rich experience and achievements. Phillips renders this passage in these words: "If I should want to boast I should certainly be no fool to be proud of my experiences, and I should be speaking nothing but the sober truth. Yet I am not going to do so, for I don't want any one to think more highly of me than his experience of me and what he hears of me should warrant."

Humbling Experience—An Antidote to Pride

(2 Cor. 11: 7-10)

And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch.

Paul's thorn in the flesh is one of the mysteries of the Bible, which has remained so, despite the ingenious efforts of men to explain it. Other translations may help us to realize more effectively the force of the passage. "And because the

revelations were of such surpassing grandeur—therefore, lest I should be over-elated there was given me a thorn in the flesh, Satan's angel to deal blows at me, lest I should be over-elated." (Weymouth.) "So to keep me from being over-elated, there was sent upon me a physical disease, sharp as a piercing stake, a messenger of Satan, to continue afflicting me, and so to keep me, I repeat, from being over-elated." (Williams.) "So tremendous, however, were the revelations that God gave me that, in order to prevent my becoming absurdly conceited, I was given a physical handicap—one of Satan's angels—to harass me and effectually stop any conceit." (Phillips.)

The "revelations" referred to in verse 7 are evidently identical with those mentioned in verse 1. These revelations were so surpassing in grandeur, so resplendent in glory, as to cause Paul to meditate on them and rise to great heights of self-exaltation, if there were nothing to prevent it; but God, who does all things well, permitted some kind of bodily infirmity, or something which Paul called a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to take hold of him and draw his thoughts and attention to his earthly state, with the result that his earthly life and heavenly thoughts were brought into balance. This no doubt was the result of the over-ruling providence of God; and it was in keeping with that which Paul says in Romans 8: 28: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." The Christian life is both contemplative and practical; and God does not want his people to be completely occupied with either extreme.

The original word for "thorn" is *skolops*, and it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Its classical meaning, according to Liddell and Scott, is anything pointed, a pale, a stake, or thorn. The marginal reading in the American Standard Version of the New Testament is stake. None of this information is very helpful, so far as the passage is concerned; and the best that we can do is simply to accept Paul's statement to the effect

that some kind of malady, which he attributed to Satan, afflicted him to the extent that his spiritual thoughts were brought into balance with his earthly mission. (Cf. Num. 33: 55 for an Old Testament example of the use of the word.)

It is worthy of notice that Paul mentions "an infirmity of the flesh" in Galatians 4: 13; and since there is such a close parallel between that letter and the one we are now considering, it is quite possible that the Galatian reference is identical with the thorn in the flesh. Both mention "the flesh" as being the place of the trouble, which makes it almost certain that it was some kind of physical trouble. New Testament references to Paul's eyes have led some Bible students to think that the affliction was ophthalmia, that is, an inflammation of the eye. Farrar is all but certain that that was the trouble. But whatever it was, the experience was humiliating to Paul. (Cf. Job's affliction and the humiliating effect it had on him; and we do know that it was brought on by Satan.)

Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. *And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

Frederick W. Robertson has noted that since Paul did not tell what the thorn was, the important thing is not its identity, but the manner in which he dealt with it. His first

reaction, so far as the record goes, was to pray; and the Bible tells us that he prayed three times. Paul's experience here was similar to that of Christ in Gethsemane. Both prayed three times that they might be delivered from a great ordeal, but in neither instances was the specific petition granted; but the New Testament clearly says that God heard both prayers, and we know that he granted strength to both which was equal to the trial in hand. (Cf. Heb. 5: 7; Deut. 33: 25b; Phil. 4: 19.)

Paul's whole concern was to do the will of God, and when he discovered what that will was, he went forward in it, regardless of the cost. It should be observed that Paul took pleasure in suffering, only if it were for Christ's sake. This great motivation in his life explains why he could sing praises to God while suffering in a dungeon prison (Acts 16: 25), and why he labored more abundantly than all the others (1 Cor. 15: 10) in carrying the gospel to all men. Where some people resignedly assert that "what can't be cured must be endured," Paul joyfully exclaims, "I take pleasure in anything, so long as it is for Christ's sake."

When Paul said, "For when I am weak, then am I strong," he was stating a paradox which is part and parcel of the Christian religion. In the words of Matthew Henry, "When we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we see ourselves weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, and we are qualified to receive strength from him, and experience most of the supplies of divine strength and grace."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What blessings have grown out of the necessity of Paul's defense of his teaching and work as a gospel preacher?

How can churches today best solve their own problems?

How does Jesus feel about all mankind?

How, then, should we feel toward that which is recorded in the New Testament?

Why does Paul's correspondence with the

church in Corinth rank among the very best teaching we have on record regarding church troubles?

What was Paul's principal aim in writing the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians?

Why could the enemies of Paul enter so often into the places where he had labored?

How did the Judaizing teacher feel about Paul's claim to apostleship?

What great blessing to Christians throughout the present dispensation has resulted from Paul's efforts against those false teachers?

Further Grounds for Glorifying

How did the apostle Paul feel about glorifying or boasting?
 Why, then, did he engage in it?
 About what did he propose to glory?
 What did the visions and revelations of the Lord prove regarding Paul?
 About whom was Paul apparently speaking when he referred to the man whom he knew?
 Why didn't he say plainly that he was speaking of himself?
 How did the apostle describe these visions and revelations?
 Why didn't he know more about them?
 What period in his experience did they take place?
 Why were these visions and revelations probably vouchsafed to Paul?
 Where was he when they took place?
 What is meant by the "third heaven"?
 What is the probable meaning of "Paradise," as used in this lesson?
 In what way did Paul describe the message which he heard in heaven?
 What is the meaning of the term "unspeakable"?
 What did he mean by the term "unlawful"?
 What unique experience did Paul have with reference to the facts of this lesson?
 If there is an exception to this, who was involved in it?
 Why was Paul evidently not permitted to speak of that which he heard in heaven?
 What were the "weaknesses" which Paul

referred to and about which he said he would boast?

A Word of Explanation

What could Paul have done with reference to boasting, if he had been so disposed?
 What reason did he give in this section of the lesson text for not boasting?

Humbling Experience—an Antidote to Pride

What was the purpose of Paul's thorn in the flesh?
 What were the "revelations" referred to by him in connection with the thorn in the flesh?
 What are some of the effects which the apostle's thorn in the flesh produced on him?
 What idea do we get from the modifying phrase "in the flesh"?
 What possible light is thrown on the nature of the thorn, as set forth in the letter to the churches of Galatia?
 What is the important thing for us to learn regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh?
 In what way was Paul's experience in this respect similar to that of Christ?
 Why did the apostle Paul take pleasure in his sufferings for Christ's sake?
 What paradox of the Christian religion did Paul express in the lesson now before us?
 When may we expect to receive strength from Christ for our own lives?

Lesson XIII—September 29, 1968

"FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL"

Lesson Text

2 Cor. 13: 1-12

1 This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established.

2 I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare;

3 Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you:

4 For he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.

5 Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Je'-sus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate.

6 But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate.

7 Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we rejoice, when we are weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting.

10 For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Salute one another with a holy kiss.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."* (2 Cor. 13: 14.)
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Cor. 12: 14-21.

Daily Bible Readings

September 23. M.	Jacob's Farewell Message (Gen. 49: 1-23)
September 24. T.	Joseph's Final Message (Gen. 50: 22-26)
September 25. W.	Joshua's Final Message (Josh. 24: 1-27)
September 26. T.	David's Final Message (1 Kings 2: 1-10)
September 27. F.	Stephen's Final Message (Acts 7: 1-60)
September 28. S.	Farewell at Miletus (Acts 20: 36-38)
September 29. S.	Paul's Farewell (2 Tim. 4: 1-22)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Written from Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and the church in Corinth.

Introduction

Letter writing at its best is a work of art, requiring great skill; and anyone who has studied Paul's letters is aware of the fact that he was a master of the art. Two of the principal purposes of letter writing, when properly done, are (1) the communication of information, or the making known of that which is in the writer's mind; and (2) the creation of an atmosphere which will be conducive to a favorable reaction, from the writer's viewpoint, on the part of the receiver. When both of these components are skillfully executed, a favorable response on the part of the recipient is more often the result than otherwise. This therefore should cause letter-writers to give careful attention (1) to what they say, and (2) to the manner in which they say it, that is, if they want favorable and definite results from their communications.

A graduate student of psychology was, while pursuing his studies in college, employed by an advertising firm to do some work for the company. All the arrangements were made orally, and there was therefore no tangible record which could be appealed to in case of a question with reference to the agreement. After the psychologist had finished the work for which he was due \$250, the man who hired him suddenly passed away. It was later discovered that this executive had made known to no other member of the firm the terms of the arrangements which he had made with the graduate student. The psychologist needed the money which was due

him, and it was entirely up to him to convince the company that he was entitled to the amount in question. He decided that a letter would probably be the best way to deal with the problem, the mechanics of which would require some ten or fifteen minutes. But this man knew both the meaning and the importance of letter writing, and he accordingly, took about one half a day from his busy schedule to compose the message which he planned to send to the company; and the results were both satisfactory and rewarding.

The desperate situation which developed in Corinth, following the receipt of Paul's epistle to the brethren there, known to us as First Corinthians, demanded prompt and vigorous action on the part of the apostle, if the work in that city was to be preserved for Christ. The Judaizers had moved in, and they had all but wrested the leadership of the church there from Paul. Something had to be done, and he, too, decided to write another letter. This letter would have to be both strong and pointed, or, to state the same thing in other words, the Corinthian brethren would have to be brought to their senses (cf. Luke 15: 17)—they would have to see themselves as they really were in God's sight. How could that best be accomplished? Paul (and he was inspired) decided on irony and sarcasm; and it would be difficult to find a more impressive example of this type of letter than that which is contained in Paul's sorrowful epistle to his beloved Corinthians. But it is

a recorded fact that Paul's painful letter accomplished the very result which he intended. (2 Cor. 7: 8-16.)

But irony and sarcasm do not tell the full story of Paul's sorrowful letter to the Corinthians; it also contains words of admonition and assurances of his deep and abiding interest in their welfare. It was necessary for him to "reprove them sharply" (Tit. 1: 13; cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17), but he made them understand that his motive was pure and that the reprimand which he was administering was prompted by

love and was for their own good. Some professed Christians apparently think that they are entirely justified, or maybe they think that they are doing a smart thing, in sternly rebuking others, and then leaving them to writhe in their humiliation or perhaps deep resentment and anger, with no thought on the rebuker's part of any effort to make better people out of them. (Rom. 12: 17-21.) People who are guilty of this kind of conduct will, of course, have to answer to God for it in the last day. (Luke 17: 1-4.)

The Golden Text

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" The words which have just been quoted have come to be known as the "apostolic benediction"; and they are frequently used to close public worship. A. T. Robertson, in commenting on these words of Paul, says, "This benediction is the most complete of them all. It presents the persons of the Trinity in full form. From 2 Thessalonians 3: 17 it appears that Paul wrote the greeting or benediction with his own hand. The passage just cited reads as follows: "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." The Cambridge Bible notes that the benediction which we are now considering came at the end of Paul's harshest epistle. The writer continues: It must be regarded as the overflowing of a loving heart, conscious of the severity of the language the apostle had been compelled to use, yet deeply penetrated with a sense of its necessity for the well-being of the flock."

The words of the benediction now before us are all familiar words, but how many people, and especially the Lord's people, have ever stopped to ask themselves what they actually mean, that is, what do they mean in the setting in which Paul placed them? The words which concern us just here and now are "grace," "love," and "communion." The ideas which they suggest or convey are indeed found in many other places in the Word of the Lord; but they are nowhere else stated with such conciseness and care. And

furthermore, the fact that this benediction has such a wide and general use strongly points to the truth that it embodies the essence of the Christian faith, and expresses the deepest longings of the believing heart.

Those who read the benediction now under consideration thoughtfully will be struck by the order of the petitions. The usual way of referring to or speaking of the members of the Trinity is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but in the case now before us the order is the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. It would be natural therefore to think that the love of God would be mentioned before the grace of Christ. The probable reason for the order of the text is due to the fact that our knowledge of God, as it respects our salvation, came to us through the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 11: 27; John 1: 18.) And so, in the words of another, "It is through the holiness and redeeming mercy of the Word made flesh that we discover the goodness and tenderness of the Father's heart. Thus the apostolic benediction follows the order of history and experience." Thus we see that the grace of Jesus Christ reappears as grace in our life as we copy him whom we serve, by imbibing his gracious spirit, and then acting as it prompts us. The love of God as displayed in the ministry and the cross of Christ is a revelation of the very heart of God and his love for the children of men. The Spirit teaches us to adore and respond to that Divine goodness that has done so much and endured so much for our salvation.

The Text Explained

A Promise to Deal Vigorously with Offenders

(2 Cor. 13: 1-4)

This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established. I have said beforehand, and I do say beforehand, as when I was present the second time, so now, being absent, to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare; seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me; who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you: for he was crucified through weakness, yet ye liveth through the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you.

From the recorded facts of the history of the church in Corinth, it is fair to conclude that the brethren there were never a settled and easy going group of people. Paul remained in that city for eighteen months, and notwithstanding the apostolic example and instruction which the brethren there had, the Greek mind in religion continued to manifest itself in all of its tireless effervescent vivacity and vigor. And judging from Paul's correspondence with them, his patience with them must have been severely tested on numerous occasions. The situation before us at the beginning of our lesson for today must have been just such an occasion. The time had arrived when he would prepare for a final showdown. The Corinthians had compelled him to boast of his attainments, and now he, in effect, tells them that they are also forcing the supreme test of power. Later on, Paul will solemnly affirm that it was to avoid just such a situation as the one he now proposes that he delayed his going to Corinth "But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I forbore to come unto Corinth." (2 Cor. 1: 23.)

This third visit, therefore, will be characterized, not by patience, but by rigorous discipline. The apostle hastens to add, however, that everything shall be done in strict requirements of the law. A formal inquiry will be conducted, and suffi-

cient witnesses will be called to establish an orderly procedure. (Deut. 19: 15; Matt. 18: 16; 1 Tim. 5: 19.) If brethren who undertake to enforce discipline would be as careful as Paul was to do the right thing in the matter, the results would be much more satisfactory. The marginal reading for "beforehand" is *plainly* which has the effect of saying that he had and was forewarning them of what to expect. His first warning is probably the one found in 1 Cor. 4: 21; the second was made when he was with them the second time; and now the third is the one of this lesson. In our way of expressing the matter, Paul simply wanted the Corinthian brethren to know that he meant business; his patience was at the breaking point.

It should be observed that Paul's words were addressed "to them that have sinned heretofore, and to all the rest," that is, those who may not have actually sinned, but who were identified with the sinners, or at least were under their influence. (Rev. 3: 1-4.) It appears that practically the whole church in Corinth and rebelled against Paul's leadership. The reason for the test which Paul proposed to make in Corinth is stated in these words: "Seeing that ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me." Paul's words regarding Christ appear to be used in contrast with the claims which the Judaizers were making, namely, "Our Christ is strong and is the protector of Jewish law, while the Christ which Paul preaches is the weak, crucified Christ." But in reply to this, Paul calls the Corinthians' attention to the fact that the Christ whom he preached was not weak toward them, either in his apostolic ministry (2 Cor. 12: 12; 1 Cor. 2: 4, 5), or in the bestowal of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7).

It is true that Jesus was crucified through weakness, that is, because of his human nature; but all of that was overcome by the resurrection, and he is now alive for evermore by the power of God. (Phil. 2: 5-11; 1 Peter 3: 18.) Verses 3, 4 of the text now before us are translated by Moffatt in these words. "That [that is, what he warned that he would do

in verse 2] will prove to you that I am indeed a spokesman of Christ. It is no weak Christ you have to do with, but a Christ of power. For though he was crucified in his weakness, he lives by the power of God; and though I am weak as he was weak, you will find that I am alive as he is alive by the power of God." Just because Christian teachers manifest the spirit of Christ in dealing with some problems which they have to meet, there are some thoughtless brethren who seem to think that they are mere weaklings; but since no word of God ever returns to him void (Isa. 55: 10, 11), they will sooner or later discover that they have the Lord to deal with, rather than the faithful proclaimer of the divine message.

The Place Where the Testing Should Begin

(2 Cor. 13: 5-10)

Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless indeed ye be reprobate. But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate.

Paul's brethren in Corinth had been led by their false teachers to question his apostleship, along with his moral character, as we have already seen in previous studies; and at the time that Paul wrote his sorrowful letter to them, they were seeking a proof of Christ that spoke in him. The apostle assured them that the proof would be forthcoming when he arrived in their city, but he cautioned them that it would be much better for them if they would first examine themselves; for if Christ did not speak through him when they were converted, and during the time he ministered in their midst, then they would find that they themselves were not in the faith. The only alternative to this would be that they had proved themselves to be such as they should not be (Thayer; cf. 1 Cor. 9: 27, where the original word is rendered "rejected"). Paul had begotten the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Cor. 4: 15), and if he himself were not a true minister of Christ, it would certainly follow that they were not genuine Christians; and it

was for this reason that Paul said, "But I hope that ye shall know that we are not reprobate." Or, to state the same thing in another way, Paul hoped that they would realize that he could meet the test which they desired. (Cf. Jer. 6: 30.)

Systematic self-examination with a view to correcting one's faults and estimating aright one's moral worth has long been recognized as a valuable exercise, in fact, indispensable if one expects to be pleasing to the Lord. (Cf. Matt. 7: 1-5.) The Speaker's Bible calls attention to the fact that Seneca, who was contemporary with Paul, wrote of this very thing. His words are, "When the day was over and Sextius had gone to his night's rest, he used to ask his mind (animus): 'What bad habit of yours have you cured today? What vice have you resisted? In what respect are you better?' " When people, and especially Christians, pay more attention to improving their own lives and characters, they will have less time, and will be less inclined, to be judging others. It is, of course, perfectly proper to help other people become better; but, as Jesus points out in his sermon on the mount, the place to begin such work is with one's self.

Now we pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do that which is honorable, though we be as reprobate. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we rejoice, when we are weak, and ye are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting. For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal sharply, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down.

Paul, of course, had no doubt about his vindication, if and when the test which the Corinthians thought they wanted, and which he promised upon his arrival in their city, was made; but his prayer for them was that they might so deport themselves as to make his discipline wholly unnecessary. This was not in order to make it appear that his ministry toward them was accredited by its success, but because

they were doing the right thing themselves. In the words of the Cambridge Bible, "St. Paul's whole heart is set upon the desire that the power of Christ which dwells in the Christian body should be displayed in the victory of his converts over evil, and this not for any personal ends of his own—not even in order that he might manifest the high estimation in which God holds him—but simply for the sake of him whose minister he is, and for their sake to whom he ministers to him."

In saying that they could do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, Paul, in effect, was saying that their well-doing and well-being were the aims in mind; and if they were accomplished before the discipline was necessary, the truth would be vindicated; and for him to act with any other motive in mind, that would be to fight against the truth, a thing which he could not do. The apostle therefore was willing to appear weak, if only the Corinthians would do right; and that was his fervent prayer for them. And he again reminds them that the purpose of the letter which he was sending them was to make any punishment for their conduct unnecessary. If every one who tries to correct evil would follow Paul's example, more good would be accomplished; but, as any careful observer knows, there are, brethren whose sole aim appears to be to convict those whom they oppose of wrongdoing, and then let the matter rest there.

Admonitions and Salutation

(2 Cor. 13: 11, 12)

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

This verse is rendered by Goodspeed in these words: "Now, brothers, goodbye! Be what you ought to be, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace, and God the source of love and peace will be with you." It would certainly require a callous heart to remain insensible to a plea like that; and it is good to know that Paul's letter to the Corinthian brethren had the desired effect. (Read 2 Cor. 7: 8-16.)

Salute one another with a holy kiss.

This exhortation is found, in addition to this instance, in the following places in the New Testament: Rom. 16: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 20; 1 Thess. 5: 26; and 1 Pet. 5: 14. The emphasis is not upon the kiss, but upon the "kind" of kiss. It was the custom of people in those days to greet each other (though probably men greeting men, and women greeting women) with a kiss. The apostles, in writing to the brethren, instructed them to make the kiss a holy one, or a kiss of love. Their greeting should be sincere. The Lord does not require his people to adhere to any particular custom, as such; but he does require sincerity in whatever they do. If handshaking had been the custom then, the inspired writers no doubt would have said, "Salute the brethren with a holy handshake or a handshake of love."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is involved in letter writing at its best?

What are two of its principal purposes?

What two things should letter writers always try to do when they write?

Give an illustration of the process of letter writing at work?

What was the occasion for Paul's writing the last four chapters of our Second Corinthians?

What principles guided him in the composition of this letter?

The Golden Text

What do the words of the golden text constitute?

What do we learn from the order of the petitions which Paul expressed?

A Promise to Deal Vigorously with Offenders

What seems to have been the over-all nature and disposition of the Corinthians Christians?

What was Paul making preparations for when he wrote the letter we are now studying?

Why didn't he visit them earlier?

What lesson should we learn from Paul regarding the subject of discipline?

To whom did he address his proposed plan for disciplinary action?

Why was the entire church involved in the trouble at Corinth?
In what way did Paul endeavor to impress upon the Corinthians the power which was his?

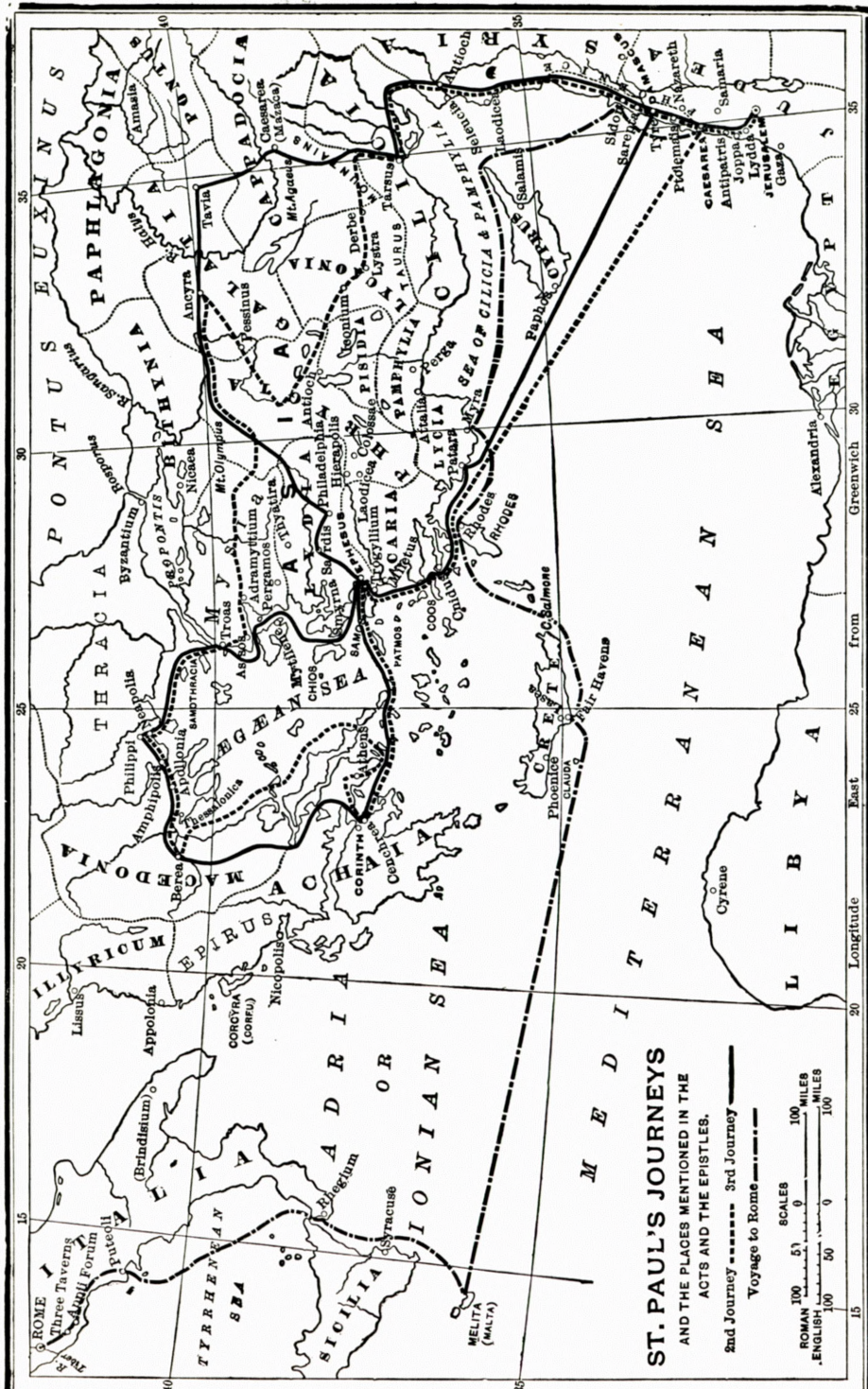
The Place Where the Testing Should Begin

Where is the proper place for Christian people to begin their test for the right?
What is the prime value of self-examination?
What change will it produce in the lives of those who are exercised thereby?
What prayer did Paul utter for the Corinthians, as expressed in this section of the lesson text?
What motive on his part prompted this petition?
What did Paul mean by his statement regarding the truth?
What further reminder did Paul offer the

Corinthians regarding the purpose of his letter?
What is the attitude regarding some brethren with reference to wrongdoing in others?
Why is such an attitude sinful on their part?

Admonitions and Salutation

What were the admonitions which Paul gave the Corinthian brethren?
What was his salutation?
What were his words to them calculated to do?
How do we know about the effect which Paul's letter had on the brethren in Corinth?
What important lesson should we learn from all of this?
Looking at the over-all correspondence of Paul with the Corinthian Christians what are some of the lesson we should learn from it?



FOURTH QUARTER

STUDIES IN GALATIANS, EPHESIANS AND PHILIPPIANS

AIM.—To learn more of these great epistles of Paul, written while a prisoner in Rome for Christ's sake, and to note their transforming power in the lives of men.

Lesson I—October 6, 1968

THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA

Lesson Text

Gal. 1: 1-5, 11-24

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Je'-sus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead),

2 And all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Gal'-ti-a:

3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Je'-sus Christ,

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father:

5 To whom *be* the glory for ever and ever. A-men'.

11 For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man.

12 For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it *came to me* through revelation of Je'-sus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it:

14 And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more

exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, *even* from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gen'-tiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Je-ru'-sa-lem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into A-ra'-bi-a; and again I returned unto Damas'-cus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Je-ru'-sa-lem to visit Ce'-phas, and tarried with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Then I came into the regions of Syr'-i-a and Ci-li'-ci-a.

22 And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Ju-dae'-a which were in Christ:

23 But they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc;

24 And they glorified God in me.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And they glorified God in me."* (Gal. 1: 24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 1: 6-10.

Daily Bible Readings

September 30.	M.....	Paul in Galatia (Acts 16: 6-10)
October	1. T.....	Further Work in Galatia (Acts 18: 22-28)
October	2. W.....	Foolish Galatians (Gal. 3: 1-14)
October	3. T.....	Fickle Galatians (Gal. 1: 6-10)
October	4. F.....	Paul and the Galatians (Gal. 6: 11-18)
October	5. S.....	Galatians and Paul (Gal. 4: 12-20)
October	6. S.....	Galatians Were Unstable (Gal. 4: 9-11)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

The "churches of Galatia," to which Paul addressed the epistle which we are to study during the next few weeks, were probably those which he and Barnabas established in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, during the time of their first great missionary journey. (See Acts, chapters 13 and 14.) These cities were located in the elevated regions of Central Asia Minor, in what the Romans called Galatia. With them, however, the name Galatia included additional territory, which lay farther north.

The four cities just named were in South Galatia, and the view which claims that the churches located in them were the "churches of Galatia," to which Paul addressed the letter now under consideration, is known as the South Galatia hypothesis. The view which limits the application of the name *Galatia* to the region of the Asiatic Gauls is known as the North Galatia hypothesis. While Paul's use of the term *Galatia* could have meant the whole of Galatia, or either North or South Galatia, the weight of evidence seems to favor the South Galatia hypothesis, and that is the view which is adopted here. We know that Paul and Barnabas established these churches in South Galatia, while we do not know anything about any others which Paul established in any other part of the region of Galatia; and we know that the geographical location and the historical record of these South Galatian churches blend perfectly with some things which Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians.

The over-all purpose of the epistle to the Galatians was the emancipation of the gospel from Jewish legalism. It is easy for us to see, with the New Testament before us, that

Christianity was a new institution. But many of the Jews of Paul's day, while accepting Christianity of God's order, still looked upon it as being simply a new chapter in the history of Judaism. This was especially true of the Jews in Palestine. Not possessing the broad outlook which belonged to Paul, these Jews viewed with alarm the possible rapid growth of a church independent of Jewish restrictions; and they were deeply concerned about the future of the temple and the law of Moses. Thus, if this new religion should be allowed to have its way without any consideration for the law of Moses, they evidently reasoned, there was serious danger that the elaborate and splendid temple in Jerusalem would lose its hold on the imaginations of men, and the whole network of Judaism throughout the world would be in immediate jeopardy.

The disintegration of their God-given and time-honored religion, from the viewpoint of these zealous Jews, was unthinkable, and, as they saw the matter, there was only one possible and sensible thing to do, namely, let every Gentile Christian be circumcised and thereby identify himself with the law of Moses; and he would then be a member of the expanding Jewish-Christian movement which could easily and quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire. In this way both Jews and Gentiles could be included, and both the law and the gospel would be preserved. With this idea firmly fixed in the minds of zealous, if not altogether scrupulous Judaizers, the internationalization of Christianity was by no means an easy or simple process, as we shall see in the study of the letter which Paul wrote to the Galatians.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Apostolic Address and Greetings

(Gal. 1: 1-5)

Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through

Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), and all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace

to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul usually, but not always, speaks of himself as an apostle at the beginning of his letters; but in this case there was a special significance attached to the expression. This was due to the fact that Judaizing agitators had gone among the Galatian churches, and had seriously challenged his right to the title of an apostle. And so, as Paul begins this letter he proceeds on the basis of an emphatic vindication of his divine commission. Some Bible students see in Paul's use of "men" and "man" in the parenthesis of verse 1 as a veiled reference to the charge that he was commissioned by *men* (the church in Antioch, Acts 13: 1-3), and that he received the Spirit through *man* (Ananias, Acts 9: 17) in contrast to the manner in which he came upon the twelve on Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4). This, however, is not certain. The reference to *men* and *man* may not mean any more than that his apostolic commission was not authorized by *men*, nor was his call to it issued through *man*. His purpose was simply to distinguish himself from false apostles who did not receive their commission from God, and shows that he ranks in every respect with the twelve. (Gal. 2: 6-9.) If this view is correct, then *man* (*men*) does not point to any individual (or individuals), but is (or are) in antithesis to Jesus Christ and God, and may be taken as equal to any man or men.

We are not told just who the brethren were who were with Paul when he wrote this letter, but it is fair to assume that they were among his intimate fellow workers. A similar reference is made to "the brethren that are with me" in Phil. 4: 21, 22; and it is easy to see that they were distinguished from "all the saints" who were in Rome. Although this letter is characterized by sharp rebuke, it should be observed that Paul did not withhold his wish for the divine blessings of grace and peace from those whom he as about to upbraid.

There was no animosity in the heart of Paul; he was simply filled with righteous indignation.

The affirmation that Christ gave himself for our sins was apparently purposely made in view of the fact that the Galatians had fallen back on the works of the law as a basis for their acceptance with God. The fact that Christ made it possible for our sins to be forgiven and for us to be delivered out of this present evil world, according to God's will, is enough to show that the gospel of Christ, and not the law of Moses, is God's plan for saving the lost in this dispensation. (Rom. 16, 17: 10: 1-3.) Paul, in verse 5, gives glory to God for the great gift of his love (John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8); but here the greeting ends. In presenting this address and greeting, Paul wove into them the two great propositions which he is about to establish, namely, his own apostolic authority, and the all-sufficient merits of Christ: and how well he succeeded in establishing them, we shall see as we go through the letter. In all his other epistles, Paul follows up his salutation with words of commendation for the faith and good works of his readers; but here he passes on to his intended rebuke. He gives praise only when and where praise is due.

The Lord's people should be fully informed regarding all the great truths of the Bible, and especially those set forth in the New Testament; and inasmuch as the devotional reading for today—that portion which comes between the first and second sections of the lesson text—contains a statement with which all Christians and potential Christians should be familiar, it is probably not out of place to call attention to it just here. No one can please God who does not have the right attitude toward the gospel; and no one can have that kind of attitude who does not understand the principle which Paul sets forth in this portion of his letter to the churches of Galatia.

There is a dreadful responsibility resting upon every one who attempts to preach the gospel of salvation, as it is revealed in the New Testament. This is made certain by Paul's use of the term "anathema." This is an anglicized Greek word; and, in its

practical application, it refers to spiritual death. Thus, according to Paul, any one, whether he be angel, apostle, or ordinary man, who preaches any gospel other than the divinely authorized gospel of Christ, will be anathema, that is, absolutely, hopelessly, and irrevocably cut off from God. This very thing was being done in Galatia; and it was for that reason that Paul wrote the letter which he sent to those churches. (Cf. Gal. 5: 12.)

The false teachers who had gone into Galatia were perverting the gospel, which means to change, corrupt, or turn it around, so that it will have a different meaning from the original intention. Goodspeed renders the passage 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." This principle is being zealously followed today by preachers all over the country. Jesus 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.) But men are turning this around to read as follows: "He that believes is saved. He may be baptized later, if he so desires; but he is saved before and without water baptism." In the light of these indisputable facts, which one of these statements will you rely upon? (Cf. 1 Peter 4: 11; 2 John 9.)

Paul Vindicates His Apostolic Authority

(Gal. 1: 11-17)

For 1 make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Galatian Christians had been living the gospel of freedom as Paul had preached it to them (Cf. Gal. 5: 1, 7), but during his absence from them his enemies had made the most of the situation, and had al-

most succeeded in turning the Galatians against him. The fact that these Judaizing emissaries gained so great a hold on the churches, which were made up mostly of Gentile Christians, shows something of their indefatigable activity, as well as their skill in the art or conciliation and persuasion. It should be remembered, however, that they did not hesitate to employ unscrupulous means, when they thought it necessary, in their efforts to gain their end.

It is, indeed, unfortunate that the spirit which these false teachers manifested did not die with them; but, as any observer now knows, the same adroit devices are still being used by some brethren today. It should be obvious to any fair-minded person that when a cause is so weak that its advocates have to work "under cover of darkness" on the unsuspecting and weaker brethren, in order to get a start in their nefarious work of overthrowing churches, that something is wrong. But as long as people are content to allow human nature (which incidentally always remains practically the same) to dictate their activities, those unholy practices will continue. No one who turns his back on human nature (cf. Rom. 6: 1-4; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Titus 3: 5), and becomes a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1: 1-11), will resort to such unfair and undercover tactics.

The Expositor's Greek Testament points out that the verb which is rendered "I make known" has the force of *reminding*, rather than of *making known*; and 1 Cor. 12: 3 and 15: 1 are cited in confirmation of this idea. It is hardly probable, or even possible, that Paul preached to the Galatians without making it plain to them that his message was from God, that is, that he was speaking as an inspired messenger. (Cf. Acts 14: 3, 8ff.) Paul therefore was evidently calling their attention to the truths which they once knew, but had forgotten. The crafty Judaizing teachers had resolved, at the cost of falsehood and detraction, to loosen the hold which the apostle had upon the respect and affections of his converts in Galatia. They not only charged that he was not a genuine apostle; they endeavored to make it appear that he was

in opposition to the pillars of the church, who were themselves of the original twelve. (Gal. 2.) Paul's enemies also asserted, as we have already seen, that he was both inconsistent and dishonest in his attitude toward circumcision and keeping the law of Moses. Some of the Galatians had already submitted to circumcision and embraced with zealous endeavor the party of their new leaders, when Paul wrote this letter to them; and the rest were thrown into a state of agitation, confusion, and division.

In charging that Paul was not a true apostle 1 Cor. 9: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 13; 12: 12), the Judaizers no doubt pointed out that since he was not with Jesus during his earthly ministry, he could not therefore have received his commission directly from him, as did the twelve; and that as a result the gospel which Paul preached was, at best, only that which he had learned from the original apostles. But what these enemies did not know, or if they did they chose not to say anything about it, was that Jesus appeared directly to Paul and gave him his commission, just as truly as he did to the twelve. (Cf. Acts 26: 12-19; 1 Cor. 15: 8-10.) Paul therefore could tell the Galatians that the gospel which he preached was not learned from men, as had been the case with them; but that it came to him directly from the Lord. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 23ff; 15: 3.)

For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it; and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my country-men, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

In saying these things, Paul was in effect telling the Galatians that they themselves could bear witness to the fact that he was telling the truth about his gospel. They knew of his past life, and if they would only stop and think, they would certainly know that his whole manner of life was completely unfitted for any such teaching as the twelve might have been able to give him. And furthermore, only a conversion

under such unusual circumstances could account for such a radical change, as that which took place in Paul.

But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus.

The manner in which Paul refers to his conversion clearly implies that it was well known to the Galatians, and that, along with the circumstances surrounding it, was further proof that he had had no human instruction regarding the gospel which he preached. Instead of going to Jerusalem where the apostles were, he went into Arabia, and then returned to the place of his conversion.

Further Proof of His Apostolic Independence

(Gal. 1: 18-24)

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

This appears to be the same visit which is recorded in Acts 9: 26. In commenting on Paul's statement regarding the visit, The Expositor's Greek Testament says, "This narrative is so independent of the account given of Paul's first meeting with the twelve in Acts 9: 26-29, that some critics question the identity of the two visits. But it is clear that both passages alike refer to Paul's first return to Jerusalem, after a prolonged sojourn at Damascus; and the subtle harmony of the two narratives is as conspicuous as their independence in details. The history states the bare fact that Paul, finding his life in imminent danger from the Jews at Damascus, fled to Jerusalem; the epistle explains why he encountered so obvious a danger; the epistle states that he prolonged his stay to see Peter; the history explains that he was unable to gain access to the apostles for a time. The history records the principal

events of the visit from the historical point of view, e. g., the apprehensions felt by the Christian body, the intervention of Barnabas, the attempts on Paul's life; the autobiography passes these by as foreign to its purpose, but is far richer in personal details, relating incidentally the date, the motive, and the duration of the visit, and particularizing the brethren whom Paul saw on the occasion; whereas in Acts mention is merely made of the disciples generally."

Thus Paul's purpose in verses 18, 19 was to show that he had had no previous association with the apostles; and that when he did see any of them, it was Peter only. James is mentioned as being an apostle, but he was not, of course, one of the twelve. The term "apostle" means one sent; and in that sense there were several such men, other than the twelve and Paul. (Cf. Acts 14: 14; 2 Cor. 8: 23, marginal note; cf. Heb. 3: 1.) James may have been called an apostle because of his great influence in the Jerusalem church. (Cf. Acts 15: 13ff; Gal. 2: 6ff, 11ff.)

Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

This was a kind of oath, or solemn affirmation, which was frequently with Paul. (Cf. Rom. 1: 9; 2 Cor. 1: 23; Phil. 1: 8; 1 Thess. 2: 5.) The solemnity of this appeal to God shows how much importance Paul attached to the independence of his ministry, as well as the persistency of the misrepresentations to which he had been subjected.

Then I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they only heard say, He that once persecuted us now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc; and they glorified God in me.

Several years of Paul's life are here passed over in silence, since they were doubtless known to the Galatians, and were not important to his purpose here. His aim was to show that he had been away from Jerusalem and the other apostles, and his ministry therefore was independent of theirs.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Where were the churches of Galatia located?
Under what circumstances were they established?
What was Paul's over-all purpose in writing the letter to the Galatians?
Who were the Judaizing teachers and what was their view of the Christian religion?
Why were they so bitterly opposed to Paul and his evangelistic program?
What was their apparent idea about receiving the Gentiles into the church?
If their idea had succeeded, what would have been the status of the church in its relationship with Judaism?

Apostolic Address and Greetings

Why did Paul refer to himself as an apostle when he wrote to the Galatian brethren?
Why did he make it plain that he was not an apostle after the manner of men?
Although intending to rebuke the brethren, how did Paul make known his feelings for them?
Why did the apostle emphasize the fact that Christ had given himself for our sins?
What two great propositions did Paul weave into his address and greetings?
Why didn't he follow his usual custom when writing and give praise to the recipients?

What great truths did Paul set forth, as may be seen in the verses between the first and second sections of the lesson text?

What is the lot of those who preach any gospel which differs from the gospel of Christ?

What is a "perverted" gospel, and how is that process being carried on today?

Paul Vindicates His Apostolic Authority

What did Paul evidently mean when he said, "For I make known to you," etc.? Give reasons for your answer.
How is this same method of undermining brethren being done today?
How may brethren make sure that they are not following such tactics?
What were some of the charges which the Judaizers evidently made against Paul, in an effort to sustain their claim that he was not a genuine apostle?
How did Paul remind the Galatians that they could bear witness to his truthfulness?
What was the apostle's aim to telling the brethren about his movements following his conversion?

Further Proof of His Apostolic Independence

What other account of Paul's visit to Jerusalem is apparently given?
What was the evident purpose of the apostle's reference to that visit?
Give some of the highlights of that visit.

In what sense was James the Lord's brother an apostle?
What appeal did Paul make to God regarding that which he wrote to the Galatians?

What was his purpose in making that appeal?
What did the Judean churches know about Paul and how did they feel toward him?

Lesson II—October 13, 1968

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Lesson Text

Gal. 2: 1-10, 19-21

1 Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Je-ru'-salem with Bar'-na-bas, taking Ti'-tus also with me.

2 And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gen'-tiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.

3 But not even Ti-tus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

4 And that because of the false brethren privily brought in. who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Je'-sus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me:

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as

Peter with *the gospel* of the circumcision

8 (For he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gen'-tiles);

9 And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Ce'-phas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Bar'-na-bas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gen'-tiles, and they unto the circumcision;

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

19 For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that *life* which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, *the faith* which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.

21 I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"*If righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.*" (Gal. 2: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 2: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

October 7.	M.....	False Teachers Prevalent (1 Tim. 4: 1-5)
October 8.	T.....	Galatian Churches Plagued (Gal. 2: 1-10)
October 9.	W.....	Efforts of False Teachers (Acts 15: 1-5)
October 10.	T.....	Liberty in Christ (Gal. 5: 1-6)
October 11.	F.....	Liberty Not License (Gal. 5: 13-16)
October 12.	S.....	Freedom from the Law (Gal. 3: 11-14)
October 13.	S.....	Deliverance (Rom. 6: 15-23)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

The term "liberty," as used in this study, has reference to the freedom which we have in Christ, in contrast with the restraints of the law of Moses, which were looked upon as a kind of slavery. As Jesus was beginning his great Galilean ministry, he came one day to the sabbath meeting in Nazareth, and at the appropriate time he stood up and read a selection from Isaiah which foretold of his mission to the earth; and among other things is this statement: "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives." (Luke 4: 14-19.) Captivity of any kind has always been a sad spectacle; but one of the most difficult from which release is possible is that of a religious character. Jesus came to set men free; and Paul proposed to see to it that those who have been set free are not again entangled in their former bondage. (Cf. John 8: 31, 32; Gal. 5: 1.)

Christianity, at the time of Paul's conversion, was limited almost entirely to the Jewish race; but when the time came for him to go and be with Jesus, it was a world-religion. There were others, of course, who carried the gospel to the Gentiles; but their work is almost lost sight of in the brighter glory of Paul's achievements. It was through his powerful leadership that the early Christian movement developed into an international brotherhood. Paul was a man of extraordinary vigor and originality, and his emancipation from the narrow limits of Ju-

daism released his powers and gave them a world-wide scope. There were two major factors which contributed to the great success which attended his labors, namely, the universal message which he had to proclaim (Mark 16: 15; Rom. 1: 16), and the breadth and strength of personality with which he interpreted that message.

The original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus was Jewish, but Paul interpreted and enlarged its significance. In the Greek language, and in the thought forms of that culture, he pictured Christ as the crucified revealer of God's love, risen to the right hand of God, sitting on his throne, acting as mediator between God and man, dwelling in his people through the Holy Spirit, and raising them with him into a divine life with the Father. This was the way of salvation for which men and women were looking, and through Paul's preaching all classes of people were able to lay hold upon Christ, to rise with him into newness of life, and to look eagerly for a full revelation of God in human affairs. That liberty is still the ideal for all people today, and it is the obligation of all Christian people to see to it that it is maintained. It is, of course, still possible for the narrow, sectarian views of professed Christians to hold people in the bondage of religious error and bigotry; and thoughtful people know that that is often done.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

An Account of Paul's Defense of
His Gospel at the Jerusalem
Conference
(Gal 2: 1-5)

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were o repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.*

Paul's purpose in this and the following section of our lesson for today was to continue the historical proof of his apostolic independence, which he began in the preceding chapter, and which we considered in the previous lesson. The visit to Jerusalem which he mentions here is the same as that referred to in Acts

15. Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch in Syria from their missionary journey, and had been with the church in Antioch for some time. (Acts 14: 26-28), when

"certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." (Acts 15: 1, 2.)

Bible students are not agreed regarding the date from which the fourteen year period is reckoned, but taking all things into consideration, it is very probable that both the three years of Gal. 1: 18 and the fourteen years of the passage were counted from the time of his conversion. No mention is made of the trip to Jerusalem which is referred to in Acts 11: 27-30, since it was during a period of persecution (Acts 12) when he would have no access to the apostles: and inasmuch as his purpose was to show his independence of the other apostles, there would be no point in calling attention to that visit. Luke says that the brethren in Antioch appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them should go to Jerusalem about the question of circumcising the Gentiles: while Paul says that he went up by revelation. It is, of course, altogether possible that the church made the appointment as a result of the revelation which had in some way been made to Paul.

It appears that the first thing that Paul did after reaching Jerusalem was to lay before the assembly the facts regarding his gospel, that is, the gospel which he had been preaching and which he was still preaching when he wrote Galatians (see "which I preach," present tense), but privately before the apostles, and probably other leading brethren. There was no doubt in Paul's mind regarding the truthfulness of the gospel which he was preaching, but it was a wise move on his part to see to it that there was no misunderstanding on the part of the others, and especially the leaders; for if there had been a rejection, or even a question, on their part regarding that which he was doing, his whole purpose in going to Jerusalem would have been

defeated. This should be a lesson to all of us. Just a little effort on our part can often clear up a matter, and avoid that which could grow into a major misunderstanding. When there is any question, try to clear the matter up before a public statement is made.

But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour: that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

It is a well known fact that Paul, as long as he could do so without violating any principle of truth and righteousness, tried to maintain a conciliatory attitude toward the Jews in his effort to win them to Christ. (Cf. Acts 16: 1-3: 1 Cor. 9: 19.) This may have been one of the reasons why he did not take Titus with him on his earlier missionary journey. The Jews would have resented a Gentile. But when it became necessary for Paul to take an aggressive stand against his Judaizing opponents, it appears that he took Titus with him to the Jerusalem conference by a carefully-designed stroke of policy. It is very likely that the Judaizing teachers had endeavored to make it appear that Paul's action in circumcising Timothy showed how he really felt about "Judaic-Christianity." But according to Paul, in the passage now before us, so far were the apostles and other leaders from seeking to set him right with reference to his work among the Gentiles, that they did not even demand that Titus who himself was a Greek, be circumcised.

According to Vincent, the *Expositor's Greek Testament*, et. al., there was no attempt made at the Jerusalem conference to have Titus circumcised. The controversy regarding him took place in Antioch, rather than at Jerusalem: and it was for that reason that Paul brought him to the conference with the apostles and others, where they hoped to have the question settled. His was the "test case," but the Jerusalem leaders did not insist on his

being circumcised. It is true that there were some at the conference who thought it "needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15: 5); but Luke says that they "believed," which, of course, means that they accepted Christ, although they were mistaken regarding the Gentile converts. There is no evidence that they caused any trouble but apparently joined the others in the final decision. (Acts 15: 22.) It is therefore altogether probable that they were not the "false brethren" of Gal. 2: 3 who had come in privily to spy out the liberty of Christians.

The term which Paul used to describe these false brethren is *pseudadelphos*, and it is found in only one other place in the New Testament—2 Cor. 11: 26. And he says concerning those now before us that they were *privily*, that is, "secretly brought in, smuggled in, sneaked in ... of Judaizers who, as Paul felt, had come into Gentile Christian congregations in a dishonorable fashion, in order to spy on them, Gal. 2: 4." (Arndt and Gingrich; cf. Jude 4.) The dignified term "believed" would hardly apply to such characters as Paul was talking about. There is a vast difference between a Christian who has a mistaken idea about some point of doctrine, and an outright hypocrite whose presence in the congregation was gained by deceit, and whose only purpose is to spy on faithful brethren. The former will listen to reason and will accept the truth when he learns it, while the latter is practically hopeless, at least until he repents and changes his basic attitude. Wise leaders in the congregations will recognize the difference between these two classes and will deal with them accordingly.

The Recognition Which They Received from James, Cephas and John

(Gal. 2: 6-10)

But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person) — they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the un-

circumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.

This is an example of the long sentences which are often found in Paul's writing. After showing that he was successful in his struggle with the unprincipled Judaizers (who might very properly be called "no-what"), having received the endorsement of the entire personnel of the Jerusalem gathering (Acts 15: 22), Paul next turns to a consideration of his personal relationship with the apostles themselves—those who were regarded by others, rather than by themselves, as being pillars in the church. This figure evidently grew out of the habitual application to the church of figures of a temple with its supporting pillars. During the lifetime of Jesus here upon the earth, Peter and John were very close to him, being members of the so called "inner circle," while James was the Lord's brother (half-brother) in the flesh. Peter (Greek) is the same as Cephas, the Aramaic surname which Christ gave to Simon. (John 1: 42.)

Not only was Paul not reproved or corrected by the apostles at the Jerusalem conference; instead they commended his ministry among the Gentiles, because they plainly saw that the Holy Spirit himself both directed and endorsed it. The whole history of the conference shows that the men who spoke on the questions of the hour; for no uninspired man would dare use such language as they employed—"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." (Acts 15: 28.) The apostles further recognized the fact that the Holy Spirit had fitted and directed both Peter and Paul into their respective fields of labors; and they did not hesitate to recognize those things. The only request which they made

of Paul and Barnabas was that they should remember the poor, a thing which they were already zealously doing. (Cf. Acts 11: 27-30.) At the time Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, he was engaged in the great collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem, and would be, within a few months, taking it to that city in person. (Rom. 15: 15-18.)

The three apostles mentioned in the text now before us not only acknowledged the truth of Paul's divine mission to the Gentiles; they also gave an outward demonstration of their attitude toward him and Barnabas, namely, "the right hands of fellowship." These men had been on the defensive throughout the controversy which began in Antioch, and, left to themselves, it would have been easy for the Jerusalem apostles to admit that the visitors to their city were in the right, and let the matter drop there. But they, too, were men of principle, as well as inspired; and they were glad to put themselves on record as fully endorsing that which had been, up to the Jerusalem conference, a very unpopular position among many of the Jews. Most people think that Paul did right in seeking the endorsement of the leading apostles *privately* before arguing his position in public; but there are many who apparently fail to recognize that the ones who were consulted also had a responsibility in the matter—that of giving their *public* endorsement when they saw that the position was correct.

The Gospel Which Paul Preached Illustrated His Own Experience

(Gal. 2: 19-21)

For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.

This section of our lesson is the climax of Paul's long and successful effort to sustain his apostolic independence and authority. After

pointing out to the Galatian brethren that he and Barnabas were completely endorsed by the Jerusalem conference, and actually received the right hands of fellowship from the apostles who were regarded as pillars in the church, Paul next shows that his apostolic independence and authority were further recognized by his encounter with Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2: 11-18); at which time he emphasized that all Jewish Christians, including Peter and the other apostles had tacitly admitted that the law could not save men when they sought justification through Christ, and climaxed his argument with his own personal experience.

Verse 19, which Bengel calls "the sum and marrow of Christianity," sets forth Paul's reason for his statement in verse 18: "For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor." Bible students are not agreed as to the meaning of "law" in verse 19, due to the fact that there is no article before the term; but if the reference is to the law of Moses, which seems most probable, then Paul apparently is saying that as the law ended with Christ (Rom. 10: 4), so it led him to Christ and accomplished its purpose in him (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15) and as a result he became dead to it (Rom. 7: 1-6). Verse 20 shows how his death to the law was accomplished, and what his new relationship is. (Rom. 6: 1-11.) His conclusion in verse 21 is that he does not propose to "declare invalid, nullify, or set aside" the grace of God by returning to the law for justification (Rom. 3: 21-31); for if that could be done, then there was no occasion for the death of Christ, and it was therefore wholly unnecessary and entirely without purpose. (Cf. Acts 4: 12.) This makes it easy to understand why Paul was "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) And this is the way it should be with us.

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, he will soon

see that one of the principal causes of disagreement on the subject is the failure to recognize the fact that the term "works" is used in two different senses by New Testament writers. It should be obvious to any thoughtful person that unity on any Bible question is never possible until and unless all the principal terms used by inspired writers on that subject are given the same place and meaning which they had when they were first placed in the divine record; and all that we need to be concerned with now is the selection of English terms which convey the original meaning to us today. When this is done with all the terms employed by inspired writers in setting forth the truth regarding any subject, unity on that subject will inevitably follow.

The law of Moses would have resulted in salvation, if those who were under it could have kept all of its requirements (Lev. 18: 5; Gal. 3: 10-12); but since that was utterly impossible on the part of fallible humanity, the result was hopeless destruction, or a new plan would have to be found. But since God is who he is, he could not be true to himself without making the salva-

tion of the race possible; hence the sacrifice of his Son and the way of the faith was introduced. This "new and living way" (Heb. 10: 20) indeed requires *works*, but they result from faith and make faith perfect (James 2: 22.) The individual has faith in Christ, and that faith leads him to do exactly as Christ commands. There is nothing meritorious about works of this kind, but the one performing them simply recognizes Christ as the author of his salvation (Heb. 5: 8, 9) and seeks to obey him. Walter M. Horton has said: "He has come and stood in our place, under the shadow of our guilt and his own wrath, so deeply identified with our lot that—if we are willing—a mystic sharing can now take place between us, whereby his infinite goodness passes over to us, while the weight of our guilt and terror passes over to his strong shoulders. In and through the crucifixion of Christ God has performed a hard and costly Deed which makes his love newly accessible, and makes the world permanently different for those, who, coming within the radius of influence of the Deed, respond to it affirmatively."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning of "liberty," as used in this lesson?

From what does the Lord make his people free?

What was the status of Christianity when Paul was converted to Christ and began his apostolic ministry?

What results followed his work as a gospel preacher?

What major factors contributed to his great success?

What was the original conception of the Messiahship of Jesus?

How did Paul interpret and enlarge it?

Give a view of the Messiahship, as Paul pictured it?

An Account of Paul's Defense of His Gospel at the Jerusalem Conference

What was Paul's purpose in making this reference to the Jerusalem visit of this section of the lesson text?

What was the occasion for the visit there?

Why did Paul consult privately with the Jerusalem leaders regarding his work?

What important lesson should we learn from his example?

Why did Paul take Titus with him to the Jerusalem conference?

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy while refusing to circumcise Titus?

Where, apparently, did the controversy regarding the circumcision of Titus take place?

How did the leaders at Jerusalem feel about the matter?

Who, evidently, were the "false brethren" to whom Paul made reference in his letter?

What difference is noted between "mistaken brethren" and "false brethren" with reference to questions of truth?

The Recognition Which They Received from James, Cephas, and John

What was Paul's next step in his fight for freedom after his victory over the Judaizers?

Who were referred to as pillars of the church and why?

What was Paul's purpose in dealing with these three men?

In what way did they give their endorsement to Paul and Barnabas?

What request did they make of the two missionaries?

What was Paul already doing about that matter?

What basic obligation was before James, Peter, and John, and what did they do about it?

The Gospel Which Paul Preached
Illustrated His Own Experience

What was Paul's primary aim in writing this section of the lesson text.

What was the next step which Paul took after the Jerusalem conference in show-

ing his apostolic independence of the twelve?

What was the gist of Paul's argument when he withstood Peter in Antioch?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to the question of "works in the plan of salvation?"

Lesson III—October 20, 1968

THE LAW A TUTOR

Lesson Text

Gal. 3: 1-3, 16-29

1 O foolish Ga-la'-tians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Je'-sus Christ was openly set forth crucified?

2 This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

16 Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect.

18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise.

19 What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; *and it was* ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one; but God is one.

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law.

22 But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Je'-sus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 So that the law is become our tutor *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Je'-sus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The law is not of faith."* (Gal. 3: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 3: 4-15.

Daily Bible Readings

October 14. M.....	A Covenant in Horeb (Deut. 5: 1, 2)
October 15. T.....	Law Added (Gal. 4: 16-19)
October 16. W.....	Law to Last to Christ (Matt. 5: 16-20)
October 17. T.....	Law Unable to Justify (Gal. 2: 11-21)
October 18. F.....	Redeemed from Curse (Gal. 3: 10-14)
October 19. S.....	Follow the Law—Severed from Christ (Gal. 5: 1-6)
October 20. S.....	Law Nailed to the Cross (Gal. 2: 14-17)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

One of the great hindrances to an understanding of the simple gospel of Christ is a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of the law of Moses. There are thousands of religious teachers today, among whom are numbered some of the outstanding preachers of the denominational world, who proceed on the assumption that the Lord's people today are indiscriminately under Moses, the prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ. This unfortunate situation is everywhere apparent, not because there is no teaching in the New Testament regarding the question, but because such men have not made the effort to handle aright the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2: 15.) This is one of the most important subjects which can engage our attention; for if people are led to see the proper divisions of the world of God (Heb. 1: 1, 2), it will be relatively easy for them to see what the Lord's will is for them.

After the history of the church has passed through the dark ages, during which time religious error held all but complete sway over the minds of men, the great Reformation burst forth upon the horizon, and it was from that mighty movement that that which is today known as Protestant denominationalism had its origin. The men who were identified with the Reformation in its early stages had as their aim the reforming of the Roman Catholic Church, rather than the restoring of the New Testament church. But failing in their efforts to reform the existing conditions, their followers organized new denominations which featured the ideas of the reformers. It was during the closing part of the eighteenth century that efforts began to be made to *restore* the ancient order of things, and during the early years of the nineteenth century the Restoration Movement got under way in earnest.

It was the aim of the men who

were responsible for the Restoration Movement to complete the work of the Protestant Reformation by restoring the New Testament church and the practice of apostolic Christianity. They had no intention of founding a new church, and neither did they found one. The restoration was not a haphazard effort, but was conceived and conducted on the basis of certain well-defined and fundamental principles, among which was a proper distinction between the Old and New Testaments. In furtherance of this idea, Alexander Campbell, one of the early advocates of a return to the ancient order of things, preached a sermon on the purpose of the law which was nothing short of revolutionary in its effect upon the religious thinking of that day; and its influence is still felt today. In speaking of the effect of that address, M. M. Davis says:

"No single sermon ever delivered by this mighty preacher had the effect of this one. It was epoch-making. Here, for the first time, he drew clearly the difference between the law and the gospel, which proved in after years an impregnable bulwark in his conflicts with religious error. The law was temporary and local, but the gospel was for all time and universal. The antitype had given way to the type, and the shadow to the substance. As a system the law had waxed old and passed away. Only the ethical, which was necessarily immortal, remained. The patriarchal dispensation was the starlight; the Jewish dispensation was the moonlight; that of John the Baptist was the twilight; and the Christian dispensation, beginning with the coronation of the Christ and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, was the full sunlight. The patriarchs had the bud; the Jews had the blossom; the Christian had the matured fruit of divine grace."

The Golden Text

"The law is not of faith." The over-all plan of the letter to the churches of Galatia was the emancipation of the gospel of Christ from Jewish legalism. We can easily see, with the New Testament before us,

that Christianity is a new and different institution; but many of the Jews of Paul's day, while accepting Christianity as God's order, still looked upon it as being simply a new chapter in the history of Ju-

daism. This was especially true of the Jews in Palestine.

And so, not possessing the broad outlook which belonged to Paul, the Jews just referred to viewed with alarm the possible rapid growth of a church independent of Jewish restrictions. What would become of the synagogue and the sacred law of Moses? were questions which were of grave concern to them. If this new religion should be allowed to go its way without any consideration for the law of Moses, they evidently reasoned, there was serious danger that the whole network of Judaism throughout the entire world would be in immediate jeopardy.

But as Paul viewed the matter,

there were two great systems in God's over-all plan; and if they were rightly understood, there was no conflict between them. The first simply paved the way, so to speak, for the other. One system was legalistic, and was referred to simply as *law*; while the other was based on the principle of belief, and was referred to as faith. When Paul wrote the Roman letter, a few months after writing Galatians, he spoke of the two systems in this way: "Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? Nay: but by a law of faith. We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." (Rom. 3: 27, 28.)

The Text Explained

An Appeal to the Experience of the Galatians

(Gal. 3: 1-3)

O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn from you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

After having fully established the independence of this apostleship and authority, Paul next turns to a discussion of the intrinsic truth of the gospel which he preached. His first effort was to show that salvation is by faith, that is, by the gospel, rather than through the law of Moses. It is thought by many Bible students that the Galatians were intellectually capable of learning, and possessed acuteness of understanding; and being conscious of that capacity, the reproach which Paul administered to them in this place would be more keenly felt. (Cf. Paul's rebuke of Peter in the preceding chapter, verse 11.) Their conduct was so inexplicable as to cause Paul to ask them if someone had cast an evil spell upon them.

The reason why it was difficult to understand the conduct of the Galatians was due to the fact that they had been so well indoctrinated in the truth by the apostle Paul himself. The original word for "was openly set forth" (*prographo*) is found, in addition to the passage now before

us, in Rom. 15: 4; Eph. 3: 3 and Jude 4; where the reference is obviously to something which was previously written, or written beforehand. In commenting on the use of the term in Gal. 3: 1, Thayer says, "Since the simple *graphein* [to write] is often used of painters, and *prographen* [to write beforehand] certainly signifies also to write before the eyes of all who can read, I see no reason why *prographen* may not mean to depict (paint, portray) before the eyes," that is, "openly set forth." Vincent says that the term now under consideration is the usual word to describe public notices or proclamations, that is, that which was posted up or placarded; and Arndt-Gingrich render it to show forth or portray publicly, proclaim or placard in public, hence, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was portrayed on the cross, that is, set forth in a public proclamation. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 1, 2.) And so, as Vincent renders the passage, "Who could have succeeded in bringing you under the spell of an evil eye, when directly before your own eyes stood revealed the crucified Christ?"

This was not the first time that Paul endeavored to learn the true facts of a situation by asking the people involved a simple question. (Acts 19: 1-3.) When a person is permitted to answer a few simple questions himself regarding some basic issues concerning his own case, it usually will not take him long to

see the truth regarding them. And so Paul asked the Galatians, "This only would I learn from you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" This was an appeal to their own experience, and as Luther notes, "See how effectually he treats the topic from experience." The implication of Paul's question was too obvious to require an answer by the Galatians; for their own experience at the time of their conversion was the only reply which was needed.

Verse 5 makes it plain that there were miracles worked among the Galatians, but it does not say by whom; but in view of the practice during the days of miracles, it is reasonable to assume that some of those brethren, received such power. (1 Cor. 12: 4-11.) The Holy Spirit was given "by the hearing of faith." (Gal. 3: 2) to all who obeyed the gospel. Since all of these blessings had come to the Galatians as a result of their believing the gospel, it would be nothing short of folly for them to think that they could be perfected by turning to mere fleshly ordinances, including circumcision.

**The Relation of the Law to the
Promise and the Reason for
Giving the Law
(Gal. 3: 16-22)**

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Now this I say: a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise.

In the preceding paragraph of the chapter from which this section of the lesson text is taken, Paul says, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the

nations be blessed. (Gal. 3: 6-8; cf. Gen. 15: 1-6.)

The apostle continues, "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto." (Gal. 3: 15.) He then goes on to say that the covenant which God made with Abraham was confirmed four hundred and thirty years before the law of Moses was given; and it was therefore impossible for that law to affect adversely the promise which was based on the principle of faith. "So then they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal. 3: 9)

What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

Paul's question regarding the purpose of the law must be understood in the light of the remarks he just made with reference to the law and the covenant which God made with Abraham. Since the promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3: 8, 16), and since the law came in between the promise and its fulfillment, it follows therefore that the law was both temporary and inferior to the gospel; and that is further confirmed by the manner in which the law was given. In the case of the law both angels (intermediaries, Acts 7: 53; Heb. 2: 2) and a mediator (Moses, Ex. 20: 19; Deut. 5: 5) were employed; but in the case of the promise made to Abraham regarding Christ, God spoke to that patriarch without any such agencies, thereby further showing that the law was inferior to the gospel which was the fulfillment of the promise made to the father of the faithful.

The general purpose of the law of Moses may be stated as follows: (1) Since the Jewish nation was being formed into a theocracy at the time the law was given, it may well be said that it was given to the Israelites for all the purposes of a civil government. (2) It was added to convince and convict men of sin—to give knowledge of sin. This was

done by giving the people a perfect standard to govern their conduct; and when they failed to keep it, the result would be a knowledge of sin. (Rom. 5: 13, 20; 7: 7-13.) But Paul makes it plain that the law was only a temporary arrangement, and was intended to last only until Christ, the promised seed, should come.

(3) It served as a wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles until Christ came, as may be seen by reading Eph. 2: 14-18. (4) It appears that the law was designed to prevent the universal spread of idolatry until Christ should come. This was done by preserving among men the knowledge of God and the practice of true religion. (Ex. 20: 1-6).

Milligan and Alexander Campbell (*The Christian System*, p. 150ff) point out that the law of Moses also served as a kind of pictorial outline of the redemption which was to be wrought through Christ. This was done by means of certain types, symbols, rites, and ceremonies. (Cf. Heb. 10: 1; Col. 2: 16, 17.) According to Campbell, "So full of the doctrine of the New institution was the Old, that we find all the apostles and Christian writers unceremoniously applying everything they quote from the law, the prophets, and the psalms to the Messiah, his kingdom, and the fortunes of his people, as if the Jewish writings had no other object then to unfold the kingdom of heaven." This, of course, makes it necessary for those who would understand the New Testament to have a working knowledge of the Old, including the meaning of the principal words and phrases which are found therein; for as Campbell continues, "All the leading words and phrases of the New Testament are to be explained and understood by the history of the Jewish nation and God's government of them." (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 15-17.)

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. But the scripture shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Paul's second question in this section of our lesson was intended to complete his argument regarding the relationship of the law and the gospel which grew out of God's promise to Abraham. The law, he says, is not against the promise, for the simple reason that the law could not do that which the gospel is designed to do, namely, make alive. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16; 6: 3, 4; Eph. 2: 1ff; Gal. 2: 21.)

The "scripture" is here personified, and is represented as a "jailor" who "shut up" all responsible people, both Jews and Gentiles, under sin, that is, caused them to be regarded as sinners. (See Rom. 11: 32; cf. Luke 5: 6, where the same original word—inclosed—is used.) This was done so that all would be subjects of the gospel, without respect of persons. (Cf. Acts 10: 34, 35.)

The Law Was Intended to Bring Its Subjects to Christ

(Gal. 3: 23-29)

But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer wider a tutor.

The term "tutor," according to Arndt-Gingrich, was a slave or custodian, literally, a "boy-leader," whose duty it was to conduct the boy or youth to and from school, and to superintend his conduct generally; he was not a "teacher," despite the present meaning of the derivative *pedagogue*. In speaking of this, Thayer says, "Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of house without them before arriving at the age of manhood; . . . the Mosaic law is likened to a tutor because it arouses the consciousness of sin, and is called *paidagōgos eis Christon* [tutor to Christ], because those who have learned by experience with the law that they are not and cannot be commended to God by their works, welcome the more eagerly the hope

of salvation offered them through the death and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God." The "tutorship" of the law continued until God, in his own wisdom, decided that the time had arrived for him to send his Son to redeem them. (Cf. Gal. 4: 1-5.) The "faith" which came is the faith (in the original), that is the gospel.

For ye are all sons of G>~>d, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

The prepositional phrase, "through faith," through the faith in the original, is explanatory. Christians are sons of God in Christ, and they became so through the gospel, that is, by obeying the gospel. To be in Christ is to be in the church, which is his body (Eph. 1: 22, 23); and that is the sphere where the Christian life is lived. It is possible that the figure of "putting on Christ" was borrowed from the custom of the Greeks and Romans in changing from the toga (the loose outer garment) of the

boy to that of the older or more matured person; and so when a person is baptized into Christ, in keeping with that figure, he is invested with the robe of spiritual manhood. The practical meaning, however, is that he becomes like Christ.

There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

After having showed the temporary and subordinate function of the law of Moses, and the manner which people are brought into Christ where salvation is to be found (cf. Acts 4: 12), Paul next points out that regardless of the distinctions which were made in previous life, all are saved on exactly the same basis, insofar as their relationship to Christ is concerned. The gospel is for all on equal terms; and all who are in Christ are heirs of the promise which God made to Abraham.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why do so many people fail to understand the Bible aright?
What is the Restoration Movement and what contribution has it made to Bible study?

The Golden Text

What was Paul's over-all plan of his letter to the churches of Galatia?
What was the difference between Paul's viewpoint of the divine plan and that of Judaizers?

An Appeal to the Experience of the Galatians

What was Paul's next step, after establishing the independence of his apostleship?
Why was he so surprised at the attitude and conduct of the Galatian Church?
What method did Paul use in trying to bring the Galatians to their senses?
Did they receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the gospel or by keeping the law of Moses?

The Relation of the Law to the Promise and the Reason for Giving the Law

What was the relationship between the promise which God made to Abraham and the law?

What was the promise which God made to Abraham and under what circumstances was it made?

Why was it not possible for the law to affect the promise adversely?

How long, after the promise before the law was given?

Why was the law inferior to the promise which was made to Abraham?

Discuss the several purposes for which the law was given?

What is meant by saying that the law served as a kind of pictorial outline of the redemption which is wrought through Christ?

Why is pome knowledge of each Testament essential to the understanding of the other?

Why was the law not against the promises of God?

Why couldn't the law make alive?

What is meant by saying that the scripture "shut up all things under sin"?

What was the purpose of this?

The Law Was Intended to Bring Its Subjects to Christ

What was meant by a "tutor," as it was practiced in Paul's day?

Why was the law called a tutor?

In what way do people become sons of God in the present age?

What is the purpose of baptism?

What is the meaning of putting on Christ?

What is said regarding the unity of God's people in Christ?

Lesson IV—October 27, 1968

BEARING BURDENS

Lesson Text

Gal. 6: 1-10

1 Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor.

5 For each man shall bear his own burden.

6 But let him that is taught in the

word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let love be without hypocrisy."* (Rom. 12: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gal. 6: 11-18.

Daily Bible Readings

October 21.	M..	.....	Law of Christ Fulfilled (Gal. 6: 1-10)
October 22.	T.	.....	Helping Others (Matt. 25: 31-46)
October 23.	W.	.....	Some without Compassion (Luke 18: 10-17)
October 24.	T.	.....	Jesus and the Suffering (Luke 14: 1-6)
October 25.	F.	.....	Jesus Bears Our Burdens (Matt. 11: 25-30)
October 26.	S.	.....	Loving Our Neighbor (Luke 10: 35-37)
October 27.	S.	.....	Ministering to Others (Acts 9: 36-43)

TIME.—A.D. 57.

PLACE.—Galatians was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the Galatian churches.

Introduction

It was pointed out in another lesson that Galatians and Romans were written during the same general period and many of the same questions are discussed by the writer in both epistles. Galatians is the most vigorous and vehement of all of Paul's letters which have come down to us. It has been described as a thunderbolt which he hurled from Corinth. A little later on and in a calmer mood, he discussed the same general issues more fully in his letter to the Romans. Galatians is more of a personal letter, intended to save some of his friends from wrong religious views and practices; while Romans, on the other hand, partakes more of the nature of a treatise.

It is not necessary to list instances in both the letters which we have been studying this quarter in which the writer discusses the same subject; but it is interesting to note that each chapter from which the final lesson in each epistle is taken considers the question of burden-bearing. In Rom. 15: 1-4 Paul says, "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that

through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." This exhortation, which follows his discussion of the weak and the strong in chapter 14, is enforced by the example of Christ and the scriptures. This ought to be enough to show us how important the subject of burden-bearing is in the Christian life.

When the story of human weal and woe comes to be fully told, the part which was played by love, both human and divine, in helping others carry their loads, will be one of immortal glory. We have all seen the strong take advantage of the weak, in order to have their own way and to gain their own desired end; but we have also seen others with great strength use it to help those who were not able to bear the burdens which had been cast upon their

shoulders. If any one doubts the necessity of being a burden-bearer for Christ's sake, let him read the Lord's own picture of the final judgment, as recorded in Matt. 25: 31-46. "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous [those who had done these things] into eternal life."

The Golden Text

"Let love be without hypocrisy." Love is one of the basic principles of Christianity, and it is utterly impossible for one to please God without love. Jesus said that love for God and love for one's neighbor were the two commandments upon which the whole law and the prophets hung (Matt. 22: 34-40); and the same thing is also true of the New Covenant. (Cf. 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 7-11, 16-21.)

The words of the golden text are Paul's way of saying that our love must be genuine; there must be no hypocrisy or deceit about it. Even the greetings which the early Christians manifested toward each other were motivated by love. "Salute one another with a kiss of love." (1

Peter 5: 14.) The betrayal kiss which Judas bestowed upon Christ is a classic example of hypocritical or pretended love. (Cf. Luke 20: 45-47.)

It is easy for a person today to pretend to love the Lord and his people for social, business, or other reasons which are unacceptable to God. Many people are lost to the cause of Christ because they are unwilling to identify themselves with a small, struggling group of Christians; but in many instances the very same people will become members of congregations, because they feel that they will be better socially or financially. Such people should try themselves, and thereby endeavor to see themselves as God sees them.

The Text Explained

The Ministry of the Strong:

(Gal. 6: 1-5)

Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

This exhortation is in direct contrast with the unbrotherly conduct referred to in the last two verses of chapter 5. "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let

us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." No one can live according to this rule, while at the same time manifesting no interest in his brethren.

The term "overtaken" implies that the victim himself is surprised to find himself involved in some trespass, rather than that the temptation was sudden and thereby caught him unawares. The idea, then, is that the person so involved is actually guilty of sin, and not simply

the victim of a surprise attack on the part of the tempter. His guilt therefore is real, and the spiritual brethren, that is, those who are living as the spirit directs (Gal. 5: 25, 26), are under obligation to restore, that is, help the offender to correct his error, but they must act in a spirit of humility and due consideration for the sinner, lest they also themselves fall into sin. The transition from the plural (brethren) to the singular (thyself) is very suggestive. The duty of restoring offenders is the obligation of *all* spiritual brethren, but each individual also needs to consider himself.

The original word for "burden" in verse 2 is *baros*, and it literally means weight, load, trouble. The bearing of burdens of this kind does not involve the transference of the burden to some one else, but signifies lending a hand to help in lifting a heavy load. The type of burden referred to, as the context indicates, is that of moral infirmities and faults, and the sorrow and shame which they awaken in the offender. This is important in the lesson now before us; for it often happens that the sorrow and shame in which the sin involves one is almost more than the individual can bear. Not all brethren who feel that they are not themselves in some kind of wrongdoing are as sympathetic with those who are as they should be; and then it frequently happens that when the former find themselves involved in some trespass, their feeling toward the unsympathetic is not exactly in keeping with the spirit of Christ. No one in this sinful world is above the possibility of falling into sin and error.

And another thing: Not all people have the same constitutional nature, and consequently, the same needs. People, in fact, may be compared to different plants which require different surroundings or atmospheres. It is often necessary to "humor" some plants, if we would lure them into blossom and flower. Each one must be dealt with according to its own needs and temperaments; and, too, it is sometimes necessary to use medication in order to provide the essential conditions which will make it possible for the plants to deal with their enemies (insects) and throw off their bur-

dens (parasites). It is in this way that we create suitable conditions for each plant; and the same principle must be followed in dealing with our brethren who have been overtaken in some trespass. This is implied in the expression "in a spirit of gentleness." Each soul is worth more than the entire world (Matt. 16: 26); and inasmuch as Christ died for all men (Heb. 2: 9), those who are following the teaching of the Spirit can and will make every possible effort to save those who are in the clutches of the evil one. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-62.)

All acceptable obedience must be actuated by a worthy, motive; and the motive which must prompt the Christian in the case now before us is plainly stated by Paul—"and so fulfil the law of Christ," which is pre-eminently the law of love. (John 13: 34, 35; Matt. 7: 12; Rom. 15: 1-3.) The obligation which rests upon those who are spiritual is an essential part of the moral content of Christianity; or, to state the same thing in other words, it is a necessary part of the Christian interpretation of human life. It is in such a situation as this that Christianity makes its most unique and distinctive pronouncement. (Cf. Matt. 25: 31-46.) The old Greek and Roman philosophers said some very fine and noble things about man's own suffering; but they had comparatively little feeling for the suffering of others. Such pre-Christian philosophy never knew the deep meaning of sympathy; and it remained for the teaching of Jesus, which is perpetuated in the gospel, to enable men to understand the wider obligations of their common humanity.

For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor. For each man shall bear his own burden.

Alford notes that the chief hindrance to sympathy with reference to the burdens of others is that of self-conceit; and that is what Paul says must be removed. The Expositor's Greek Testament observes that "any conceit of our own strength or goodness is a vain

delusion, for we are nothing. Let no man compare his own with others' work: this will only feed his vanity; but let each scrutinize his own work. Then, if he finds there ground for rejoicing it will be in the ability that has been given by God's grace to such a one as he is: for each one will have his own burden to bear of conscious guilt and shame."

The statements made in verses 2 and 5 of the text of this lesson seem to present a contradiction; but when they are carefully considered and taken together, it will be found that they give a brief description of the essence of Christianity—a definition, in few words, of the spirit of the Christian life. The Christian faith is based upon two great underlying principles, which, while not strictly original with it, are, nevertheless, in their higher expression, among the most precious of its gifts to man. They explain at once the mystery and comprehensiveness of its scheme of salvation for the individual Christian; and also the divine beauty and eternal reality of that great ideal of the church as the kingdom of God, a community of souls in which each individual member must bear his own burdens, while all the members are bound together, bearing each other's burdens, and united in him who is the great burden-bearer of humanity, and the head of the church which is his body.

It is impossible therefore to obey one part of this law without obeying the other. No man can bear his own burden without at the same time bearing the burdens of others; and neither can he realize the awful responsibilities of his own being without at the same time realizing the claims of his brethren. No man can find his true life without giving up his own individual will—without merging his personal interests in those of human brotherhoods. Thus, when Paul says that "each man shall bear his own burden," he is speaking of the burden which no one can transfer from himself to another. The original term for "burden" in verse 5 is *phortion*, and the idea which is expressed by it is that of a burden which one cannot get rid of, as no soldier on active service can transfer his equipment to some

one else. (Cf. Matt. 11: 30; 23: 4; Luke 11: 46. where the same original word is used.)

When God created man, he laid firm and deep the foundation of individual life and individual character. Every man therefore is responsible for his own being and destiny; and he must bear the burdens which belong to his individual lot. For example: there is the burden of *physical disability* or *disfigurement*, such as lameness, blindness, or deformity of any kind. Such a burden is always a grievous thing to bear, but it must be borne, nevertheless. (Cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7, 8.) And, too, there is the burden of *intellectual weakness*. Not all men have the same mental capacity. Some excel others in acquiring knowledge, or in the range of vision and foresight; and notwithstanding the diligent efforts put forth by those who are less fortunate, they find themselves outdistanced by those with keener intellect and greater foresight. They may think that this is a hard lot, and it may be so; but they must bear the burden of their own defects as best they can. There is also the burden of some permanent or far-reaching *consequence of a former act of our own*, such as neglect, recklessness, or sin. The sin may have been forgiven, but the temporal consequence will continue. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-15.) Such burdens cannot be lifted from the shoulders of God's children, but the Lord has promised that they shall be sustained in carrying them. (1 Cor. 10: 13; 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10.)

While it is true that by bearing our own burdens we learn better how to bear those of others, it is also true that we are better fitted to bear our own burdens when we bear the burdens of our fellow Christians. This is the moral paradox of our being. If we are sinking beneath the weight of our own burdens, then let us courageously shoulder the burdens of our neighbor, and the two will be incomparably lighter than our own alone. The measure of our love to each other must be the love that Christ showed to us. (Cf. 1 John 3: 16; 4: 20, 21; John 13: 34, 35.) With this in mind, no Christian can say, "I have done enough for my fellow man; I have loved enough; I have forgiven enough."

The Inexorable Law of the Harvest

(Gal. 6: 6-8)

But let him that is taught in the world communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto is own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.

This appears to be another instance where Paul briefly mentions a subject, and then gives a fuller discussion in the book of Romans. In this place he seemingly is speaking of the mutual responsibility of the teacher and those who are taught. The following translations of verse 6 should enable us to get the point which Paul aims to make known. "Now let him who is instructed in the word, communicate of all good things to the instructor." (The Living Oracles.) "When any one is under instruction in the faith, he should give his teacher a share of all good things he has." (The New English Bible.) "Those who are taught must share all the blessings of life with those who teach them the Word." (Moffatt.)

Any one who will take the time to read that which Paul says in other parts of his writings will have no difficulty in seeing that this was his teaching regarding the question, although he made it plain that he did not always take advantage of the responsibility which rested upon the shoulders of those whom he taught. (1 Cor. 9: 1-18.) But the idea which Paul is emphasizing in the passage now under consideration is that of responsibility on the part of those who have received a blessing from others in the Lord's service; and this is the way that he stressed the matter when he wrote to the Romans: "For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in carnal things." (Rom. 15: 26, 27.) That

which has been said will become more apparent when it is remembered that in both letters Paul was dealing with the relation between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, and especially with reference to the activities of the Judaizers. And so, in the passage now before us, the apostle continues his protest against the arrogant pretensions and selfish exclusiveness of the disturbers of the peace in the churches of Galatia.

Some Hortatory Conclusions

(Gal. 6: 9, 10)

And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith.

This section of our lesson for today, along with the two preceding sections, is directly related to the injunction found in the closing part of chapter 5. Paul had warned the Galatian brethren that they could not please God while walking after the flesh, and then showed them what the fruit of the Spirit is; and then adds, "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." The rules of conduct set forth in chapter 6: 1-10 are those which the Spirit enjoins; and so, as a kind of summary, Paul exhorts, "And let us not be weary in well-doing," that is, in sowing unto the Spirit; "for in due season," at the time of harvest, "we shall reap, if we faint not," that is, if we do not relax our efforts, and become exhausted as a result of our giving in to evil. (Cf. Matt. 15: 32; Mark 8: 3; Heb. 12: 3, 5, for other instances of the use of the term "faint.")

Just as there is a proper time for reaping, there is also a proper season for sowing; and as this season comes to us, let us take advantage of it by sowing to the Spirit, which, in its practical meaning, means to do that which is good. Such opportunities come to Christian people practically every day, and they are exhorted to take advantage of them. We're obligated to all men, but in a special way to our brethren. "The household of the faith" is the same as "the household of God" (Eph. 2: 19), that is, the church. This exhortation was addressed "churches"

as such, and not to individual Christians; and it is therefore easy to see that congregations, as well as individual Christians, have an obliga-

tion to all men, both Christians and those who are not, with the preference, of course, to those who are the Lord's people.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the relationship between Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans?

Why should both letters be read, if one would have a better understanding of each of them?

What is the place of mutual helpfulness in the divine economy?

Discuss the attitudes of many professed Christians, as they are demonstrated both for and against helping each other bear the burdens of life.

In what way has Jesus made plain his will regarding this matter?

The Golden Text

In what way is love related to the Christian system?

How broad does God expect the love which his people manifest to be?

How does Paul go about saying that the love of God's people must be genuine?

In what particular manner did the early Christians manifest their love for each other?

Should Christians greet each other with a kiss of love today? Give reasons for your answer.

The Ministry of the Strong

Why can't a person live the Christian life while manifesting no interest in his brethren?

What is meant by being "overtaken" in any trespass?

Who are the "spiritual" brethren and what is their duty toward those who are in the clutches of sin?

What attitude are they exhorted to manifest, as they go about this work?

Why change from the plural (brethren) to the singular (thyself)?

What is the relationship between the law of Christ and mutual burden-bearing?

What are some of the burdens of others which we should help to bear?

Why do so many people need help in their burden-bearing?

What is one of the principal hindrances to sympathetic feelings for others?

Why must every man bear his own burden?

The Inexorable Law of the Harvest

What is God's will regarding those who teach God's word and the taught?

What do we learn from Romans regarding the manner in which Paul sought to apply this principle?

What relationship does this phase of the question have with the over-all subject of burden-bearing?

Some Hortatory Conclusions

In what way is the lesson text for today related to the closing part of chapter 5?

Why say, "And let us not be weary in well-doing"?

What is the meaning of the term "faint," as used in this lesson?

If there is a proper time for reaping, what must also be true of the sowing?

In what way does one sow to the flesh?

How does one sow to the Spirit?

To whom should the Christian seek to do good?

What is the household of the faith?

Does the New Testament make a distinction between "congregational" and "individual" performance in this respect?

Give reasons for your answer.

Lesson V—November 3, 1968

PAUL WRITES TO THE EPHESIANS

Lesson Text

Eph. 1: 1, 2, 15-23

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Eph'e-sus, and the faithful in Christ Je'-sus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

15 For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Je'-sus which is among you, and the love which *ye show* toward all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for

you, making mention *of you* in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him;

18 Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who

believe, according to that working of the strength of his might

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and

every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus."* (Eph. 3: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 1: 3-14.

Daily Bible Readings

October 28. M.....	Paul Visits Ephesus (Acts 18: 18-23)
October 29. T.....	Paul Labors in Ephesus Two Years (Acts 19: 1-10)
October 30. W.....	Diana of Ephesus (Acts 19: 24-28.)
October 31. T.....	Confusion in Ephesus (Acts 19: 29-41)
November 1. F.....	Paul Addresses the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20: 17-35)
November 2. S.....	Paul and Wild Beasts of Ephesus (1 Cor. 15: 29-32)
November 3. S.....	Ephesus, One of the Seven Churches (Rev. 2: 1-17)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

"Ephesians" is one of four letters, known as "the prison epistles," which the apostle Paul wrote during his first Roman imprisonment, the incarceration referred to in Acts 28: 16-31. But the letter which we know as "The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians" presents a problem which is not common to any other letter of this group. This problem has to do with the destination of the letter, that is, to whom was the epistle addressed? There is no doubt about its being an inspired document, or that it was written by Paul in his Roman prison. Bible students are hopelessly divided on the question of the letter's destination. This is an important question, and it deserves the careful attention of those who want to know as much about the epistle as possible, but we should remember that it is not the most important topic which should engage our attention in this introduction.

Vincent thinks that the letter was addressed to the church in Ephesus, while Conybeare and Howson are just as certain that it was not addressed to that church. Conybeare and Howson go far enough to say that "perhaps the least disputable fact is, that it was not addressed to

the church in Ephesus." Time has more or less vindicated the viewpoint of Conybeare and Howson, and most modern Bible scholars either share their point of view, or are inclined toward it. Even the conservative J. W. McGarvey says that "it is doubtful, to say the least, whether this epistle ought to bear the title which it has."

The strongest evidence, or so it seems, against the theory that the letter was addressed to the church in Ephesus, is found in the epistle itself. We know from the record in Acts (19: 8-10; 20: 31) that Paul spent approximately three years of intense labor in Ephesus, and that he was bound to the brethren there by the ties of a very close affection (Acts 20: 17ff). It would therefore be inexplicable that he would write a letter to a church with which he had labored longer than any other, so far as the record goes, and not have a single message of personal greeting to send the brethren there; and it is a demonstrable fact that there is no such message in the epistle now before us; and, in this respect, "Ephesians" is unlike any other letter from Paul which has come down to us. But more about this later on in this study.

The Golden Text

"Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus" When Paul wrote his 2

Corinthians, he said to his brethren there that he had been in prisons

(plural) more abundantly than his critics; but he assured them that he was a minister of Christ at the time of his incarceration. (See 2 Cor. 11: 22-27; cf. 12: 7-10.) The Corinthian epistle was written some five years before he wrote the letter we are considering today; and it is fair to assume that his experience with prisons was much greater than it was when he wrote to the brethren in Corinth. Practically any follower of Christ today would heartily commend the course which Paul pursued, even though it did frequently get him into trouble; but any thoughtful observer knows that few churches today would want a preacher who had been in prison even once, to say nothing of the many times which Paul was so detained, even if such an experience came in consequence of devoted service in the cause of Christ.

The story is told of a congregation which was in need of a preacher. One of the elders was interested in knowing just what kind of minister his people desired; and he, accordingly, wrote a letter, as if he had received it from an applicant, and read it to the "pulpit committee." The letter which the elder wrote follows: Gentlemen: I understand that you are in need of a preacher, and I would like to apply for the place. I have many qualifications for such work, which I think that you will appreciate. I have been blessed to the extent that I believe that my preaching is with power; and I have also had some success as a writer of religious subjects. Some say that I am a good organizer, and I have been a leader in the work in most of the places where I have labored. Some brethren, however, have some things against me, and I feel that it is only fair for me to tell you of them.

I am over fifty years of age, and I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some instances I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances; and I will have to admit that I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any wrongdoing on my part. My health is not too good, although I am still able to accomplish more than the average for a man of my age. I have had to work with my own hands to help pay my living expenses, and for some others who were with me at the time; and I might add that the churches in which I have preached, while located in some of our largest cities, were relatively small.

I have not been able to get along too well with the religious leaders in different places where I have preached. In fact, some of them have threatened me, have taken me to court, and have assaulted me physically. I am not very efficient at keeping records; and I have even been known to forget those whom I have baptized. However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you, even if I have to work at my trade in order to help with my support.

After the elder had read the letter which has just been quoted, he asked if the committee was interested in the preacher who wrote it. The members of the committee promptly replied that such a man would never do for their congregation—that they were not interested in any unhealthy, trouble-making, contentious, ex-jailbird, and that they felt insulted that his application had even been presented to them. But they did say that they would like to know the name of the applicant, whereupon the elder, who had read the letter, answered, *The Apostle Paul!*

The Text Explained

The Salutation

Eph. 1: 1, 2

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The letter known to us as *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, especially

the first three chapters, has been described as the profoundest truth ever revealed to men through a human being. It is, consequently, the grandest of all the Pauline epistles. This letter has deeply impressed the greatest minds of earth, and the peculiar and sustained loftiness which characterize its teaching has earned for it the title of "The

Epistle of the Ascension." It carries, as it were, among "the heavenlies" and lifts us into the eternities. In the words of E. C. Caldwell:

"We claim for Ephesians nothing less than what Marcus Dods claimed for the Gospel according to John: 'It is a perfect work of art; from the first word to the last there is no paragraph, sentence, or expression which is out of its place, or with which we could dispense; part hangs together with part in perfect balance.' The flow of its sublime eloquence sweeps forward along the channel of logical arrangement and argument. The student does not have to try to arrange the contents according to any logical and orderly scheme. It is not left to the student to adopt any plan or to put ideas under any one head. Paul has cared for all of these things himself. The epistle itself is a logical whole, a literary unit. When the student has discovered the true organism of the epistle, he will see every part dove-tailing beautifully into every other part. In the perfection of its form as well as in the heavenliness of its matter he will see an evidence of its inspiration." (*The Princeton Theological Review*, Vol. XVI, p. 379.)

The expression "at Ephesus," as the marginal note states, is not found in some of the most ancient authorities or manuscripts; and that fact, along with the impersonal character of the epistle, accords well with the viewpoint that the letter was addressed, not to a single church—"at Ephesus"—but was a kind of circular letter, intended for a group of churches, possible those in the general vicinity of Colossae, where the so-called "Colossian heresy" had apparently gained a foothold. No one can read Colossians and Ephesians together, without being impressed with the similarity which exists between them; and if the two epistles are carefully studied, it will be seen that Ephesians bears just about the same relationship to Colossians, that Romans does to Galatians—a fuller treatment of the same general theme in a more detached and impersonal manner.

We have seen in a previous study that Paul wrote Galatians after hearing of the result of the work of Judaizing teachers among the

churches of Galatia; and then, a little later on, he discussed the same general subject more fully in his letter to the Romans, which was probably the most strategically located church in the brotherhood at that time. What, then, could be more natural than for the apostle to follow the same general plan in the case now before us? And it appears that that was exactly what he did. After replying to the Colossian heresy, as it was reported to him by Epaphras, it seems that he prepared a fuller treatment, more detached and less personal, on the same general theme, and sent it to the churches in the general vicinity of Colossae, of which Ephesus was one.

In writing on this subject, J. S. Howson (*The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson), in answer to the question as to how the name of Ephesus came to be inserted in the more recent manuscripts, says, "These perplexing questions are in some measure answered by the hypothesis originated by Archbishop Usher, that this epistle was a circular letter addressed not to one only, but to several churches, in the same way as the Epistle to the Galatians was addressed to all the churches in Galatia, and those to Corinth were addressed to the Christians 'in the whole province of Achaia.' On this view, Tychicus would have carried several copies of it, differently superscribed, one for Laodicea, another perhaps, for Hierapolis, and another for Philadelphia, and so on. Hence the early copyists, perplexed by this diversity in their copies, might many of them be led to omit the words in which the variation consisted; and thus the state of the earliest known text of the epistle would be explained. Afterwards, however, as copies of the epistle became spread over the world, all imported from Ephesus (the commercial capital of the district where the epistle was originally circulated), it would be called (in default of any other name) the *Epistle from Ephesus*, and the manuscripts of it would be so entitled; and thence the next step, of inserting the name of Ephesus into the text, in a place where some local designation was plainly wanted, would be a very easy one. And this designation of the epistle

would the more readily prevail, from the natural feeling that St. Paul must have written some epistle to so great a church of his own founding as Ephesus." (*The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul (People's Edition*. See pages 762-766.)

Coleridge called the epistle we are now considering "one of the divinest compositions of man," while F. R. Barry thinks that it is "at once the most 'modern' in many ways, of all the books of the New Testament and the richest record of Christian experience." Some one has observed that Romans, addressed from east to west, was Paul's greatest statement of the way of salvation; while Ephesians, addressed from west to east, was his greatest statement of the whole purpose of God in human history.

Paul's Prayer for the Enlightenment of His Readers

Eph. 1: 15-21

For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

There is a strong implication in the opening words of this section of the lesson text, that Paul had heard of the conversion of his readers only by report of others; and when we consider such passages as Eph. 3: 1, 2; 4: 20, 21, we are face to face with facts which make it almost certain that the writer of the letter which we are now considering was

not personally acquainted with those to whom he wrote, at least with some of them. This, of course, was literally true, if the letter was sent to several of the churches in the province of Asia, as may be gathered from his reference to the brethren in Colossae. (Col. 1: 3-7; 2: 1-5.)

In the preceding paragraph of the chapter from which this portion of the lesson text is taken, which is the devotional reading for today, Paul begins his discussion of the church as the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, and he expresses his thanks to the heavenly Father for the blessings which he so graciously bestows upon that body of people. The "Colossian heresy" was evidently fresh in the apostle's mind, when he wrote Ephesians; but it is obvious that his aim in writing this epistle was not primarily to attack that heresy: his purpose was much broader than that. His teaching in the epistle would, of course, destroy the heresy, or would enable his readers to refute it, if it had not already reached them; but it would do so by unfolding to them the eternal purpose of God, rather than by direct reference to the heresy itself.

The apostle Paul, in the Colossian letter, placed the emphasis upon the preeminence of Christ as the head of all things, especially the church; and in doing so, he set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ which is known to us. But in the Ephesian letter, the apostle shifted the emphasis somewhat, and centered the attention of his readers upon the place and purpose of the church, as the body of Christ, as the medium through which the eternal purpose of God is made known (Eph. 3: 10), and through which he is to receive glory from his redeemed creatures (3: 20, 21).

As Paul views the matter in Ephesians, God's eternal purpose is to gather into one body the whole created universe, and thereby restore harmony, both between the creatures themselves, and between them and their Creator. The apostle's prayers were for that glorious consummation; and in order that his readers might achieve that goal, his whole endeavor was that they

might have a full and clear knowledge of the eternal purpose of God, which he was working out through Christ Jesus, whom he gave "to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Everything, argues Paul, as he reaches the climax of this matchless document, centers in the purpose of God. All discord between the elements in the church—all distinction between Jew and Gentile—must yield to that grand purpose, if God's will is to be done. In the words of another, "The vision is one of a great oneness in Christ and through him in God, a oneness of birth and faith and life and love, as men, touched with the fire of that Divine purpose, seek to fulfil, each in himself, the part that God has given him to play in the world, and, fighting against the foes of God, to overcome at last."

The wonderful blessings which Paul mentions in his prayer for the people of God are almost unlimited; and if the heirs of these gracious promises and blessings are to have a well-grounded hope of possessing all of them in their fulness, they must be made to see and understand that God has all the power which is necessary, in order to translate the hopes of his people into a glorious realization of their spiritual inheritance. An example, or a demonstration, of this power is seen in the resurrection of Christ and his exaltation to the right hand of God. This is to say that the same power which raised Christ from the dead and gave him the tremendous authority which he now possesses and exercises, is also available in behalf of God's children; and if one will read the first part of chapter 2, he will see that God did use that same power in making alive the people of Christ who had been dead through their trespasses and sins.

Christ As Head of the Church

Eph. 1: 22, 23

And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

This passage of scripture has been called one of the most daring to be

found in all the Bible. The exaltation of Christ is breathtaking, in and of itself; but when we stop to think that Jesus Christ, who once lived here upon the earth as a human being and worked as a carpenter in Nazareth, who once wore a crown of thorns and died upon a cross as a malefactor, is now the ruler of the universe, Lord of lords and King of kings, and is honored as God (John 5: 22, 23), words fail us as we try to describe our feelings in the light of such stupendous facts. The apostle Paul declares elsewhere that Christ shall reign as king "till he hath put all his enemies under his feet," and that "the last enemy that shall be abolished is death." (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.)

The expression "all things" which have been placed in subjection to Christ is as broad as the universe. (Read 1 Cor. 15: 27; cf. Heb. 2: 8.) Hodge notes that "in both of these passages the word *all* is pressed to the full extent of its meaning. It is made to include all creatures, all capable of subjection; all beings save God alone, are made subject to man in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords, and King of kings." (Cf. Psalm 8, from which Heb. 2: 8 was quoted, and in which David, the inspired psalmist, sang of Jehovah's glory and man's dignity.)

In commenting on the passage now before us, William Hendriksen, in his *New Testament Commentary* on Ephesians, says, that it is in the twin epistles, Colossians and Ephesians, that the figure head-body appears for the first time in the writings of Paul, to indicate the relationship between Christ and his church. He then notes that the passage now under consideration does not actually say that Christ is the head of the church, but rather that he is head over all things to the church, which is his body. That way of expressing the matter merely enhances the beauty of the symbolism. Dr. Hendriksen then goes on to point out that the practical meaning of the expression is this, that since the church is the body of Christ, with which he is organically united, he therefore loves it to the extent that he exercises his infinite power in causing the entire universe—"all things"—to cooperate in its interest. But that Christ is

actually the head of the church is specifically stated. (Col. 1: 18, 24.)

When Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ, the "fulness" of him that filleth all in all, he was, according to many eminent Greek scholars, referring to the fact that the church supplements, that is, complements, or, which is the same thing, makes Christ complete, in pretty much the same sense that a wife supplements, complements, or makes her husband complete. The practical meaning of this is that the church has substantially the same mission today that Christ had while he was here upon the earth, that is,

so far as his ministry among people was concerned; or, to express the same thing in another way, the mission of the church today is but an extension of the personal ministry of Christ, while he was here among men. This, of course, has no reference to the perfection of the plan of salvation, which was completed when Christ arose from the dead, and took his seat at the right hand of God; but rather to the task of making known to the lost that salvation through Christ is available to them, and ministering to the needs of the race, as the opportunity presents itself. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what general grouping of Paul's letters does Ephesians belong?

Under what circumstances, apparently, did Paul write the epistle?

For whom, seemingly, was it intended?

The Golden Text

What experience did the apostle Paul have with prisons?

For whose sake was he imprisoned and how did he feel about it?

Why would the Lord, speaking from the human point of view, permit a man like Paul to be treated in such a manner?

What difference is seen in professed Christians then and now in this respect?

The Salutation

What can be said regarding the contents and nature of the Ephesian Letter?

In what way is it related to Paul's letter to the Colossian Christians?

Why would he want to send a "circular letter" to the churches in that area?

What reasons can you think of, for and against, the idea of a circular letter?

In what respect does the epistle to the Ephesians compare with the one to the Romans?

Paul's Prayer for the Enlightenment of His Readers

What has led some people to think that Paul was not personally acquainted with all of the intended readers of the letter we are now studying?

In what general context is Paul's prayer for his readers found?

What principal difference is noted between the epistle we are now considering and the one which was sent to the Colossian brethren?

What is taught in the Ephesian letter regarding God's eternal purpose?

What discord will thus be destroyed by the fulfillment of this purpose?

What blessings did the apostle request for his readers?

In what way did Paul encourage them to look forward to the realization of their hopes?

How did he seek to make them aware of the great power of God?

Christ As the Head of the Church

Why is this section of the lesson text referred to as one of the most daring in the Bible?

What does the expression "all things" include?

Why was everything made subject to Christ?

Where do we first read of the head-body relation of Christ and the church?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the Lord's feeling for the church?

What does Paul apparently mean by saying that the church is the "fulness" of Christ?

What, then, does this relationship suggest with reference to the duty of the church?

What difference would this make in the work of the Lord's people, if they really felt this way about the matter and made a sincere effort to act accordingly?

Lesson VI—November 10, 1968

MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION REMOVED

Lesson Text

Eph. 2: 11-22

11 Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gen'-tiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands;

12 That ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Is'-ra-el, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Je'-sus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition,

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace;

16 And might reconcile them both

in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh:

18 For through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.

19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,

20 Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Je'-sus himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For through him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father."* (Eph. 2: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 2: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

November 4. M.....	Purpose of the Law (Gal. 3: 23-29)
November 5. T.....	No Justification by the Law (Gal. 2: 11-21)
November 6. W.....	Barriers between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2: 11-22)
November 7. T.....	All One in Christ (Gal. 3: 26-29)
November 8. F.....	Law of the Spirit of Life (Rom. 8: 1-9)
November 9. S.....	Perfect Law of Liberty (James 1: 19-27)
November 10. S.....	No Respect of Persons (Acts 10: 34, 35)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

Those who are familiar with the history of the Bible are aware of the fact that it is divided into three major dispensations, namely, (1) the patriarchal, for the first twenty-five hundred years of the human race, or from Adam to Moses; (2) the Mosaic or Jewish, for the next fifteen hundred years, or from Moses to the beginning of the reign of Christ; and (3) the Christian, for all time between the beginning of the reign of Christ and the end of

time as we know it. During the first dispensation, Jehovah dealt with the race on the basis of the family or tribal relationship, that is, he gave direction to the father of the family, or the chief of the tribe; and commanded him to pass on the instruction to those who were responsible to him.

As a part of the development of the scheme of human redemption, Jehovah chose Abraham from among all the peoples of the earth,

separated him from his kindred, and directed him into the land of Canaan. God promised this patriarch that a son would be born to him and his wife Sarah, and that through this son all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 12: 1-3; 17: 1-21.) The name of this son was Isaac, and he, in turn, became the father of Jacob and Esau. (Gen. 25: 19-26.) Jacob and his family, in due time, became heirs to the promise which Jehovah had made to Abraham, and which had been vouchsafed to Isaac. While the family of Jacob was relatively small, they migrated to Egypt; and by the time of the exodus, the descendants had multiplied until they probably numbered about three million souls.

After the liberation of the children of Jacob or Israel, as they came to be known (Gen. 32: 22-32), Moses led them to Mount Sinai; and it was there that Jehovah, for the first time in recorded history, gave a written law which served two prin-

cipal purposes, namely, (1) it governed their entire lives, and (2) it separated them from all other peoples of the earth. The system of government which grew out of the law which was given to the people of Israel pertained to the nation as a whole, rather than to the father as the head of the family, as had been the case during the preceding dispensation. This change in government marked the beginning of a new dispensation, so far as the Israelites were concerned; and at the same time all others of the human race were permitted to walk in their own ways (Acts 14: 16), the practical meaning of which was, that they might continue to serve Jehovah as they had during the preceding age; become Israelites by being proselyted to the new system; or reject Jehovah altogether. And so, for the next fifteen hundred years, Jehovah took the people of Israel unto himself, and endeavored to keep them within the wall which separated them from the rest of mankind.

The Golden Text

This portion of the lesson is in the principal text, and will be covered in its proper place.

The Text Explained

The Moral Condition of the Gentiles Prior to Their Conversion

(Eph. 2: 11, 12)

Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that 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.

The entire chapter from which the lesson text for today is taken, is, in the American Standard Version, divided into two paragraphs; and the idea which Paul discusses may be briefly summed up under the following heading, namely, (1) the manner in which God's redemption is wrought—verses 2-10; and (2) the way in which God's people are made one in Christ—verses 11-22. Salvation is by grace, through faith; and the unity of God's people was made possible through the cross of

Christ. That which is said in chapter 2 may be looked upon as an expansion of the apostle's statement to the effect that the church is the fullness, that is, complement, of Christ, or, that which makes him complete. And inasmuch as it is God's purpose to bring the whole created universe into an all-embracing unity in Christ, it was but natural for Paul to discuss the basic unity of the church.

It is fair to assume, from the reference to the Gentiles in the text now before us, that a large part of those to whom Paul addressed the letter we are now studying were non-Jewish; and his evident claim in calling their former moral and spiritual condition to their attention, was to awaken in them gratitude for their salvation in Christ. And what Paul said to the people of his day, is equally true of us today; and if those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ would keep in mind their lost estate before they were purchased by the blood of

Christ, they, too, would be more grateful for their salvation, and would have a greater desire to bring more lost people to the Saviour of men. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 12-16.)

Everything which is included in the idea of salvation depends upon God, and since those who are lost have no access to the divine means by which men are saved, while they are still following the ways of sin, they are hopeless. But when they are brought to a knowledge of God's plan for saving the lost, and are willing to become a part of that plan, by doing that which God requires of them, then their salvation is assured. The apostle Paul discusses this question at length in the following passage: "But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the work of reconciliation.

"We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for he saith, At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, And in a day of salvation did I succor thee:

behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation)." (2 Cor. 5: 18-6: 2.)

The Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ

(Eph. 2: 13-18)

But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the

enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father.

Ye were "separate from Christ," but now "in Christ Jesus," indicates the difference, *before* and *after* the conversion of God's people, who were the recipients of the letter from which the lesson text for today's lesson is taken; and what was true then, is also true now. It is indeed Christ who makes the difference. We have seen in an earlier lesson that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, were under sin and needed a Saviour, and it was the good pleasure of the Father to make his Son Jesus the effective means unto salvation, to every one who would accept his offer by faith. But before Christ began his work of saving men, he died on the cross as a sacrifice for sin; and, having been raised up from the dead, he became the *author*, that is, the source or procuring cause, of eternal salvation unto all who obey him. (Heb. 5: 8, 9, cf. marginal note.) Christ is fully able to save all who will call upon and trust him, as he has ordained; and it is a fact, fully and plainly set forth in the Scriptures, that there is no salvation for any one apart from him. (Acts 4: 12; cf. John 14: 6.)

As we continue to look at the difference which Christ has made, we learn that he has brought a number of blessings into our life, which could not be ours apart from him. (1) *He brought God into the lives of those whom he redeemed from sin.* This was true of the Gentiles to whom Paul wrote (see Acts 19: 23-41; cf. Rom. 1: 18-32); and it has been true of every person who became obedient to the glorious gospel of salvation. When God comes into the life of any one, that individual has access to every good and perfect gift (James 1: 17), and has the assurance that he will never be separated from the love and care of God, so long as he remains faithful to him. (Rom. 8: 28, 31-39.)

(2) *Christ has brought hope into the lives of his people.* One of the worst things which can happen to any person in this life is to be without hope. The average individual can endure almost anything, if he

has hope that relief will come in due time; but if there is no hope, then he has little to live for. Those who are familiar with the teaching of the New Testament are aware of the fact that hope is one of the basic elements of Christian character. The lack of hope in one's life is not a natural weakness; it is, on the contrary, the result of a deep estrangement from Christ. It is utterly impossible for any one to please God and be happy in this life without hope. If there were no hope, there would be no optimism; for optimism proceeds upon the assumption that good will ultimately triumph over evil.

(3) *He brought freedom of approach to the Father for his faithful followers.* This is the great affirmation of the passage which serves as the golden text for today, namely, "For through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." (Cf. Eph. 3: 12.) In writing to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul says, "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 the 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." (Heb. 4: 14-16.) All approach to the Father must be made through Christ. (Cf. John 15: 16; 16: 23.)

(4) *The Lord Jesus Christ has brought equality to all of God's children.* Before the reign of Christ, all human beings were separated into two groups, namely, (1) those who were near, and (2) those who were far off (Cf. Acts 2: 37-39); but when Jesus began his mediatorial work, all men had been adjudged sinners before God (cf. Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 10, 23; 11: 32), with the result that when any were saved they entered the fold of Christ, or, which is the same thing, the church, with identical rights and privileges (cf. Acts 15: 8, 9; Rom. 3: 22, 10: 12). There is no respect of persons with God, and he is willing to hear and bless any and all who call upon him. The Lord Jesus

Christ, as the golden text clearly and emphatically declares, has broken down the middle wall of partition; and, as any one who reads the New Testament can see, he has created a universal brotherhood, which allows no preferences and permits no distinctions, that is, if an honest effort is made to please the Lord.

(5) *He has brought about a fraternal relationship with love as its chief ingredient.* Before the cause of Christ swung into action, there was enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles; but when the gospel of salvation became effective in the lives of those who accepted it, all of the Lord's people found themselves reconciled in one body unto God. The object of the teaching of Christ is not to create differences between his people, but to remove them. And so, wherever the principles of the gospel find their way into the lives of people, the result is to break down, in the strength of Christian brotherhood, all harmful walls of partition, and remove all feeling of hostility. James tells something of this beautiful relationship in the following words:

"Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." (James 3: 13-18; cf. Isa. 11: 6-9; 1 John 3: 13-18; 4: 20, 21.)

It required the creative power of Almighty God to bring the first man into existence (Gen. 1: 26, 27); and it likewise requires God's creative power to redeem man from sin. "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.) "For we are his workmanship, created in

Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph 2: 10.) "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 [that is, the renewing which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit; see Thayer], which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Tit. 3: 4-6.) Paul's statement to Titus is an exact parallel of the Lord's teaching regarding the new birth—born of water and the Spirit. (John 3: 3-5.)

Earlier in his letter we are now studying, Paul speaks of the great power of God which was exercised in the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and he then says, "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest:—but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2: 1-6.)

"That he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." The creation of the two, Jew and Gentile, in one body is another way of saying that both were made into the church, or that the church which the Lord came to establish is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Both individual believers are created anew, or made into new creatures, when they obey the gospel; and the church as a whole was also created by the handiwork of the Lord, as this section of the lesson text so clearly declares,

and as we shall see in the next section of our lesson for today. In Eph. 4: 24, Paul says, "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Cf. Gal. 6: 15; Col. 3: 10.)

Not only was the convert to Christ created anew at the time of his conversion; the process of renewing continues. (Cf. Rom. 12: 1, 2.) When Paul wrote his Roman letter, he said that they were raised up to "walk in newness of life," the meaning of which is a new kind of life. (Rom. 6: 3, 4.) And in the passage in Colossians, cited above, the apostles notes, "And have but on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." In the words of J. W. Shepherd, "The union or peace which flows from the abrogation of the law by the death of Christ is progressive so far as it is inward or subjective. The outward work is done. The long feud in the human family is healed. The distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished. All the exclusive privileges of the former are abrogated. The wall which had so long shut out the Gentiles is removed. There is now one fold and one shepherd." And in the language of Paul, "There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3: 11.)

The Church Is God's Dwelling-Place in the Spirit

(Eph. 2: 19-22)

So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Thus, the apostle Paul assures the Gentile believers that they are no longer in the state or relationship, referred to in the first section of the lesson text for today. Having been redeemed by the blood of Christ,

they, along with the Jewish Christians have been created anew, and have been constituted members of the church which the Lord established on the day of Pentecost, following his resurrection from the dead. They are therefore fellow-citizens with the saints, those who have been set apart unto God, and of the household, that is, the church (1 Tim. 3: 15) of God.

The foundation upon which the church, and, consequently, every Christian, is built, is here called the "foundation of the apostles and prophets." When Jesus told Peter that he would build his church, he said that it would be upon the truth which that apostle had just confessed, namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16: 15-18); and when Paul spoke of the foundation in 1 Cor. 3: 11, he said that it is Jesus Christ himself. There is, of course, no contradiction between any of the statements just referred to. The church, indeed, is built upon Christ, the truth regarding his nature and identity, and the teaching of the apostles and prophets, that is, the prophets of the New Testament, who were evidently also inspired men. (Eph. 4: 11.)

The term "corner-stone" is apparently used in two senses in the Scriptures, namely, (1) a foundation-stone (Isa. 28: 16); and (2) a stone which crowns the building,

(Zech. 4: 7); and it appears that the application is equally correct when applied either to the foundation or to the top. (Cf. Acts 4: 11; 1 Pet. 2: 4-8.) Bible students are not agreed as to which use was intended by Paul in the passage now under consideration. William Hendriksen says, "The cornerstone of a building, in addition to being part of the foundation and therefore *supporting* the superstructure, finalizes its shape, for, being placed at the corner formed by the junction of two primary walls, it determines the lay of the walls and crosswalls throughout. All the other stones must adjust themselves to this cornerstone. So also, in addition to resting in Christ, the spiritual house is determined as to its character by him. It is he who settles the question as to what this house is to be in the sight of God, and as to what is its function in God's universe. It is Christ who gives the house its needed *direction*. Believers, as 'living stones' (1 Peter 2: 5), must regulate their lives in accordance with the will of the cornerstone, Christ."

The temple of God is a growing structure. The aorist ("being built upon") refers to their conversion, while the ("ye also are build together") denotes a continuous process. (Cf. Acts 2: 47; 1 Pet. 2: 5.) This temple is God's dwelling-place "in the Spirit."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

In what way is Bible history divided?

What is indicated by the dispensations?

Give a resume of the Patriarchal dispensation.

Under what circumstances did the Mosaic dispensation begin?

What two principal purposes did the law of Moses serve?

What was the principal difference between the two dispensations just referred to?

What happened to the Gentile world when the Mosaic dispensation began?

In what way were the two people kept separated?

The Moral Condition of the Gentiles Prior to Their Conversion

What are the two principal divisions of the second chapter of Ephesians?

What important place does the church occupy in the general plan of God for the world?

Why did Paul address his remarks to the Gentiles?

Why should people always be made aware of their salvation from sin?

From whom does the salvation from sin come?

What assurance should this bring to all people who have been taught the truth?

When is the time for salvation to be sought?

Why do so many people put off the matter of their salvation?

The Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ

To what two periods in the life of the Gentiles Christians did Paul make reference?

What should the truth which he expressed to them mean to us?

What is the difference, if any, between Jews and Gentiles regarding salvation?

Give reason for your answer.

What does the writer of Hebrews mean by saying that Christ became the *author* of eternal salvation to all who obey him?

What is indicated by the term "obey" and what does that do with reference to the

idea that people are saved by faith only?
Where, alone, may salvation from sin be found?
What are some of the differences which Christ has made in the lives of those who obey him?
What is the condition of those who do not enjoy these blessings?
Why is hope so important in the life of a person?
What does it mean to have access to the Father?
Why can't people approach the Father except through Christ?
What difference does heavenly wisdom make in the life of the Lord's people?
In what sense are people created anew in Christ?

The Church Is God's Dwelling-Place
in the Spirit

What encouragement did Paul offer the Gentile converts in this section of the lesson text?
What is the significance of being "fellow-citizens" with the saints and household of God?
What is the foundation of the church?
Who were the prophets referred to in this section of the lesson text?
In what sense is Christ the chief corner stone?
What effect does the corner stone have on a building?
What is the present status of the church and how does God dwell in it?

Lesson VII—November 17, 1968

PAUL'S MINISTRY

Lesson Text

Eph. 3: 1-8, 14-21

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Je'-sus in behalf of you Gen'-tiles,—
2 If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward;
3 How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words,
4 Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ;
5 Which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;
6 *To wit*, that the Gen'-tiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Je'-sus through the gospel,
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power.
8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gen'-tiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father,
15 From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
16 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;
17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 May be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
19 And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.
20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
21 Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Je'-sus unto all generations for ever and ever. A-men'.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let us give ourselves to our ministry."* (Rom. 12: 7.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 3: 9-13.

Daily Bible Readings

November 11. M.....Paul, "Untimely Born" (1 Cor. 15: 1-11)
November 12. T.....Paul's Call (Acts 9: 1-22)
November 13. W.....Qualifications of an Apostle (Acts 1: 15-26)
November 14. T.....Original Twelve (Matt. 10: 1-4)

November 15. F.....Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15, 16)
 November 16. S....."Commit to Faithful Men" (2 Tim. 2: 1-7)
 November 17. S..... Paul's Sufferings (2 Cor. 11: 18-33)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Home.

PERSONS.—Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

It is exceedingly doubtful if any purely human being ever put as much into his ministry as Paul did, and it is practically certain that no one ever surpassed him in that respect. When he wrote his great letter to the Roman brethren, he gave to them and to the world in all ages some idea of his accomplishments, in these words:

"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I have therefore my glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. 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; yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but, as it is written,

There shall see, to whom no tidings of him came,
 And they who have not heard shall understand.

"Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: but now, having no more any place in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you, whensoever I go unto Spain (for I hope to see you in my

journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first in some measure I shall have been satisfied with your company)—but now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ." (Rom. 15: 14-29.)

Few men can truthfully say that they have fully preached Christ in even a small area, but Paul, as he plainly says, had proclaimed Christ in practically all of the eastern part of the Roman Empire; and he was making plans, as soon as he could discharge another phase of his ministry, to transfer his activities to Spain, in the far west, where the gospel, up to that time, had not been preached. Spain, in many ways, was the new world of that day, and Paul, in some manner, had learned of its missionary possibilities; and he had resolved to take advantage of them. Thus, when many preachers, upon reaching his age, think of retiring and taking things easier, the great apostle to the Gentiles was making his plans to enter an entirely new field, where he hoped to preach the gospel, while working with his own hands to support himself, and sometimes others. It is indeed an inspiring exercise to consider the ministry of the apostle Paul.

The Golden Text

"Let us give ourselves to our ministry" If we had no other information on the subject, other than that which is found in the record of the life and works of the apostle Paul, we would know that the term "ministry" has several facets. In referring to his own work, Paul mentions (1) ministering the gospel of God (Rom. 15: 16); (2) ministering unto the saints (Rom. 15: 25); and (3), by implication in the case of Mark, the ministry of service, that is, a helper (2 Tim. 4: 11; cf. Ex. 24: 12, 13). The word "minister" literally means a servant, and that which one does in that capacity is service. Thus, in whatever capacity one serves, he is, in that case ministering; and so, when the Lord's people give themselves to their ministry, they are simply performing whatever service is expected of them.

The words of the golden text are found in this context, namely, "For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith. For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that

exhorteth, to his exhorting; he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Rom. 12: 3-8.)

It is obvious, from the context just quoted, that the term "ministry" is used here in a limited sense, that is, it is different from prophecy, teaching, exhorting, etc. Godet notes that the term *diakonia*, from which we have the word "ministry," generally in the New Testament denotes a charge or an office confided to someone in the church. Robertson calls it a general word for Christian service of all kinds, including ministers and deacons. Godet continues: "In our passage this term *ministry*, placed as it is between prophecy and the function of teaching, can only designate an activity of a practical nature, exerted in action, not in word. It is almost in the same sense that in 1 Pet. 4: 11 the term *diakonein*, *serving*, is opposed to *lalein*, *speaking*." The passage referred to in First Peter, along with verse 10, and which is a good commentary on the golden text, especially in its wider meaning, reads as follows: "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

The Text Explained

Paul's Commission to Preach the Mystery of Christ to the Gentiles

(Eph. 3: 1-8)

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of your Gentiles,—if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mys-

tery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to

preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The over-all idea which Paul sets forth in the first three chapters of Ephesians, is that the church, under Christ, is the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. And when the apostle reached the close of what we call chapter 2 (there were no chapters and verses in Paul's original letter), he had made it plain that the middle wall of partition had been broken down, and that the Jews and Gentiles who had accepted the gospel of salvation were one in Christ. And before discussing the eternal purpose further (see verses 9-13), Paul wanted his Gentile brethren to have a clear understanding as to his right to speak and write as he did unto them. He was a prisoner of Christ, just as he was a servant, apostle, and minister of Christ; and he was made so because, in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, he had been hated by his Jewish countrymen, and had by them been falsely accused before the Roman rulers, with the result that he was in prison "in behalf of you Gentiles."

The manner in which Paul referred to the question of the Gentiles' knowledge of the dispensation, that is, the Divine arrangement or stewardship, as the marginal note has it, whereby he was made the apostle to the Gentiles, more or less confirms the fact that he was not personally known to all the readers to whom, and for whom, he was writing. This would hardly have been true, if he was writing to the Ephesian brethren alone.

Paul's knowledge of the mystery about which he was writing came to him by revelation (Gal. 1: 11, 12) as he had stated before, that is, earlier, in the epistle which he was then writing; and he assured them that when they received and read the epistle, they would be able to perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ. A "mystery" is something which has not been revealed, and that was true of the plan and purpose of God with reference to the reception of the Gentiles on an equal basis with the Jews in the generations which preceded their revelation to the apostles and prophets of the Lord. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of

the manner of this revelation in these words:

"But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: but as it is written,

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,

And which entered not into the heart of man,

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (1 Cor. 2: 6-13.)

Paul's appraisal of himself, verse 8, was an estimate which he referred to frequently. (See 1 Cor. 15: 8-11; 1 Tim. 1: 12-16.) "Least than the least" is a comparative formed upon a superlative; and it is as if he had said, "I am *more least* than all the saints." (Vincent.) The reference was to his persecution of Christ and his church, which he could never forget.

A Prayer for the Readers' Advancement to Spiritual Maturity

(Eph. 3: 14-19)

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 with passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God.

The passage just quoted is one of the prayers of the apostle Paul, which are found in his epistles; and if his words are carefully read, it will be easy to see that he was praying, as he always did, for a definite blessing for those to whom he wrote. It is possible for the Lord's people to be inspired by the memory of Christ to think, speak, and do better, and they may in a measure succeed and derive a great amount of satisfaction from their endeavor; but we will never know the joy of Christian joy, hope, and strength, until Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

The kind of life which is pleasing to God is not that which observes outward forms only; those who are acceptable to the Father must be characterized by purity and Christ-like holiness in the inward man. This kind of spirituality has, in every age of the world, been in danger of extinction, through the pressure of material influences. Some one has said, "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, too 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." (Cf. the Israelites and the nations about them; and the church and the things for worldly show.)

If one will carefully read the entire Book of Ephesians, he will be able to see that God's purpose with reference to Christ includes more than the human race, and that seems to be the plain implication of verse 15, of the section of the lesson now before us. David Lipscomb, in commenting on this passage, says, "The whole family—servants, angels, the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, and Christians on earth—are one family named from the head and Father, God, as the human family takes its name from the head and father of the family."

One has only to read the New

Testament, in order to see that it is the will of Christ that he, along with the Father, dwell in the hearts of his people. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14: 23; cf. Rev. 3: 20; Gal. 2: 20; 2 Cor. 13: 5.) The term "dwell" means "to live, to make one's abode or home, in contrast with a temporary or uncertain visit."

The indwelling which the apostle is discussing in the passage now under consideration is to be regarded as a plain and literal fact, and not simply as an influence derived, but separate, from Christ. A dead Socrates may influence his disciples, apart from his actual presence; but that is not the way a living Christ influences his followers. The same verb which we are now considering is also found in Col. 1: 19; 2: 9; and if one will compare the passage now before us with those references, he can easily learn the meaning of the word "dwell." It is the Father's will therefore that Christ should make his abode within us, never again to be compelled to knock at our heart's door, or have his claim disputed.

But how can Christ dwell in a Christian's heart? The answer is, "Through faith" (Rom. 10: 17; Gal. 4: 19). In commenting on the meaning of "formed" in the Galatian citation, Thayer, says, "Until a mind and a life in complete harmony with the mind and life of Christ shall have been formed in you." It should be easy for us to understand how the image of Christ can be formed in a person by teaching him the story of Jesus. We all know how certain people who come into our homes can change the whole atmosphere there, such as our speech and action; and that is exactly what Christ does when he takes up his abode with us. He affects our social intercourse and conversation; and shapes our business transactions, by shutting out the bad and bringing in the good; and by providing new standards and measurements. It is not even necessary for us to seek for these things; for they will come to us in the pathway of loyalty and duty to Christ.

When the Bible says that Christ dwells in the hearts of his people, the idea is not that he dwells in our emotional nature alone; instead, he is to live in and rule our thoughts, feelings, and will, as well as our actions. Such a mastery of our lives will give us a clear conscience, and bring to us a peace beyond our ability to understand. This should give us some idea of what it means to be a member of the Lord's church. Those who are members of the church which Christ established, and who are in good standing with the Lord, are being molded into his likeness, so that they will be prepared to dwell in that place which may be described as a place prepared for a prepared people. (John 14: 1-3.)

We should not, in our study of this lesson, overlook the prominence of faith in the New Testament Scriptures. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; John 3: 18; 8: 24; Acts 16: 31.) That which one believes gives rise to his conduct, and his conduct results in his character. (Cf. Prov. 23: 7.) Edward Ward Carmack said, "An act often repeated, hardens into a habit; and a habit long continued, petrifies into character." The relationship between faith and conduct is not only true in the matter of becoming a Christian; it is equally relevant to one's life as a follower of Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 7; 1 Pet. 1: 8.) Faith will bring Christ into one's heart; but it also requires faith to keep him there: for, as the apostle says, he dwells in our hearts by faith. But, one may ask, What is faith? The practical answer, insofar as the thought of this lesson is concerned, is that we believe in Christ, trust him, rely upon him, have confidence in his word of promise, cleave to him, and obey him. Such is faith, and it is that kind of faith that Christ dwells in our hearts.

What are some of the blessings which we gain by this indwelling?

(1) *Constancy*. What thoughtful Christian, who is trying to do his best, has not at some time in his life cried out, "Oh, that I were *always* what I am *sometimes*!" (Cf. Heb.

13: 8; 1 Cor. 15: 58.) (2) *A better understanding and a greater vision—"strong to apprehend."* (Cf. Acts 10: 34, where the same original word—*perceive*—is used.) The apostle Peter's experience had enabled him to see the truth which he announced in Acts 10: 34, 35. Christianity has been defined as the reproduction of the life of Christ in the human heart; and we should ask ourselves, Is our perspective broad enough to enable us to reproduce the life of our Lord in our heart? (3) *A knowledge of the love of Christ and the fulness of God.* (Eph. 3: 19.)

An Ascription of Praise to God for His Great Goodness toward Us

(Eph. 3: 20, 21)

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Charles Hodge, in commenting on this section of the lesson text, notes that "Paul's prayer in the preceding verses had apparently reached a height beyond which neither faith, nor hope, nor even imagination could go, and yet he is not satisfied. An immensity still lay beyond. God was able to do not only what he had asked, but infinitely more than he knew how to ask or think." And *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* points out that superlatives are here piled one upon the other to impress us with the truth of God's ability, all of which the child of God so often fails to take advantage of. In the words of James, "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James 4: 2; cf. Rev. 4: 1ff, where the throne of God and the court of heaven are pictured; Rom. 8: 31-39.) God's great power is being "energized in us" (cf. Eph. 2: 10; Phil. 2: 12, 13; 4: 13); and his glory will continue to be manifested in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout eternity. May God help us to realize something of our privileges as his children!

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction
In what way did Paul describe the extent of his ministry?

Why was he able to accomplish so much?
 What over-all motive actuated him in his efforts to preach Christ?
 Why was he so anxious to visit Spain at so late a period in his lifetime?
 What effect should the study of his ministry have on us?

The Golden Text

What does the broad sense of the word "ministry" include?
 What, then, do the Lord's people do when they give themselves to their ministry?
 In what general context are the words of the golden text found?
 In what particular sense, did Paul apparently use the term "ministry" at this time?
 What similar statement does Peter make with reference to our ministry?

Paul's Commission to Preach the Mystery of Christ to the Gentiles

What is the over-all subject which Paul discusses in the first three chapters of Ephesians?
 At what point in his discussion did he speak of his commission to preach to the Gentiles?
 Why did he want the Gentile brethren to know of his commission to preach to them?
 Under what circumstances did he become a prisoner for Christ's sake?
 How did Paul come to have his knowledge of the mystery of Christ?
 What is a "mystery" and why did Paul speak of the gospel as a mystery?

To whom did God first reveal this mystery?
 In what way was the revelation made?
 What were the "things" which eye saw not and ear heard not, etc.?
 What did Paul speak of himself so disparagingly?

A Prayer for the Readers' Advancement to Spiritual Maturity

What is the nature of the prayer which Paul offered for his readers?
 What did he always do when he prayed for his brethren?
 What effect on Christian people does the presence of Christ in their hearts have?
 What kind of life on the part of his people is pleasing to God?
 Whom does every family in heaven and on earth include?
 What does it mean for Christ to dwell in the hearts of his people?
 What is the place of faith in the lives of Christian people?
 What is faith, in the sense in which Paul uses it in this lesson?
 What are some of the blessings which we gain by the indwelling Christ?

An Ascription of Praise to God for His Great Goodness toward Us

What is implied in this ascription of praise?
 What is God able to do for his people?
 Why do so many professed Christians fail to take advantage of God's great power which is available to them?
 In what way does God receive glory, as expressed by Paul in the lesson text?

Lesson VIII—November 24, 1968

ADMONITIONS TO PURITY AND FAITHFULNESS

Lesson Text

Eph. 4: 17-32

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

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

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

20 But ye did not so learn Christ;

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

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

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

24 And put on the new man, that

after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.

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

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

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear.

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children."* (Eph. 5: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 4: 1-16.

Daily Bible Readings

November 18. M.....The Pure in Heart (Matt. 5: 1-8)
 November 19. T.....Growth in Grace (2 Pet. 3: 14-18)
 November 20. W.....Milk and Meat (Heb. 5: 11-14)
 November 21. T.....Babes in Christ (1 Pet. 2: 1-5)
 November 22. F.....Works of the Flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21)
 November 23. S.....Fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-26)
 November 24. S.....Example in Purity (1 Tim. 4: 11-16)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and those to whom he wrote.

Introduction

God and the world in which we live are diametrically opposed to each other. God is pure, holy, good, and can be relied upon in every sense of the word. The world, on the other hand, is impure, profane, sinful, and deceitful. The contrast between God and the world is found in all parts of the Bible, but nowhere is it more clearly drawn than in Paul's statement in Rom. 1: 18-32. In verse 28, the apostle says, "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do things which are not fitting." John warns, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2: 15-17.) The words of James appear even more severe, namely, "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." (James 4: 4.)

If there were nothing else in the Bible on the subject, that which has just been noted would be enough to justify the conclusion that God wants his people to be pure and

faithful. Paul told the Corinthians that he had espoused them to one husband, that he might present them as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2.) No decent man wants an impure wife, and it is certain that Jesus does not want his bride to be guilty of sinful relations with those who are opposed to him. The same apostle, in writing to the Hebrews, said, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) The faith referred to in the passage just quoted is composed of two ingredients, namely, (1) conviction that God is a reality, and (2) confidence in his integrity, or, which is the same thing, assurance that he can be relied upon to keep his promises.

Jehovah created man in his own image, and has made it plain that he loves him with an everlasting love. (Cf. Jer. 31: 3.) No sooner had man turned his back upon his Maker, than God began to prepare for his redemption (Gen. 3: 15); and the effort on God's part to bring man back to him required the sacrifice of his only begotten Son (2 Cor. 5: 21). Only a pure and faithful Son could have made possible the salvation of sinful men; and inasmuch as those who are redeemed belong to the Redeemer (cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20), it is unthinkable that they could please

him, to say nothing of living with him, unless they are pure and faithful. As John pictures the closing scenes of the present dispensation, he gives this description of the moral and spiritual condition of the Lord's people: "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceed-

ing glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19: 6b-8.)

The Golden Text

"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children." It was pointed out in the previous paragraph of this lesson that God created man in his own image, which means that he was upright, and that his moral and spiritual nature was in the likeness of God's righteousness. (Cf. Eccles. 7: 29.) Man's departure into sin, or his alienation from God, made it necessary for a new creation to take place, before man could again live with God, and claim him as his Father. We learn from 2 Cor. 5: 18-21 that God reconciled man to himself, and that the reconciliation takes place in Christ; and the same apostle declares in the verse which precedes that citation that "if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" or, as the marginal note has it, "there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new." (Cf. Tit. 3: 5, 6; Eph. 2: 10.)

The redemption of those who were living in sin made it possible for them to enjoy sonship, and John exclaims, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we

shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 1-3.) The writer of the words "just quoted wants all of the Lord's people to know what a glorious thing it is for them to be children of God; but the future of the believer is more wonderful than his present state.

It is wholly beyond the ability of any human being to conceive of the glory which shall be his, when he is finally made into the complete likeness of Christ. As already pointed out, all those who are redeemed in Christ are made into new creatures, but their transformation into the complete likeness of their Redeemer will not be finished until they shall see him even as he is. In becoming a Christian, one is made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1: 4); and he must continue to grow into the divine likeness during the remainder of his life here upon the earth, if he is to please God (2 Pet. 1: 5-11). This is what John means when he says that "every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"; and that is the reason behind Paul's exhortation to be imitators of God, as beloved children. (Cf. Matt. 5: 8; Col. 3: 1-4.)

The Text Explained

Old Gentile Vices Must Be Renounced

(Eph. 4: 17-19)

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.

When studying the Ephesian letter, one should keep constantly in mind the general nature of the epistle. The first three chapters are devoted primarily to a discussion of God's eternal purpose, so far as this world is concerned, and the place which the church occupies in that purpose; and then as he passes to the next portion of the letter (chap-

ters 4-6), he turns his attention to the manner in which the Lord's people can do their part in bringing to a practical realization the Divine purpose with reference to the church. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the doctrinal portion of the epistle, on the whole, is set forth in the first three chapters, and then follows in the last three chapters the hortatory part of the letter, in the main, whereby the readers are urged to give practical effect in their lives to the ethical implications which grow out of the doctrinal portion of the epistle. But, as the careful reader will observe, there are exhortations in the doctrinal portion of the epistle, and there are also doctrinal aspects in the hortatory portion.

As one reads the first three chapters, he will come to see something of the privileges which have been vouchsafed to those who have been redeemed by Christ, or those who are members of the church; and now, as the apostle passes to the other part of the letter, he wants his readers to know that the enjoyment of these privileges requires practical Christian living. And so, in the second portion of the letter, Paul calls attention to the unity of the church, which has been brought about by the Spirit (verses 1-3); the basis of that unity, (verses 4-6); and the means given, or the method by which, that unity is brought about (Verses 7-16).

That which was said in the closing part of the preceding paragraph may be summed up in a general exhortation regarding the promotion and preserving the unity of the church, which the Spirit has authorized and made possible; and then in the following paragraphs (4: 17-6:

20), the apostle sets forth the moral and spiritual transformations of character which must take place in the redeemed people, as a result of their knowledge of Christ and in consequence of their relation to him as members of his body, which is the church. When people leave the world and come into Christ, as a result of their obedience to the gospel, they are abandoning one mode of life and are beginning a new one. (Read 2 Cor. 5: 17; Rom. 6: 3-7; Tit. 3: 5, 6; Eph. 2: 8-10.) This "new kind of life" (that is the lit-

eral meaning of *newness of life*) cannot be maintained, while still participating in the life which was supposed to have been abandoned.

And so, the first thing which the apostle does in this section of the lesson text, is to urge his readers to have no further part in the type of living which characterizes those who are separated from Christ. (Eph. 2: 11, 12.) The world in which we live is a sick world, and the apostle Paul, more than once, described the moral condition of the world into which Christianity was born. And if one is willing to read the writings of pagan philosophers, he will soon see that they also had pretty much the same view of heathen society. "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." (Tit. 1: 12-14; cf. 1 Cor. 15: 33, where Paul quotes from the Greek poet Menander.)

Paul says that the terrible sins of the Gentile world resulted (1) *from the vanity of their mind*. This statement reminds one of another estimate by Paul and a comment by Peter. After showing that the Gentiles were without excuse in their attitude toward God, Paul says, "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." (Rom. 1: 21-23.) And in the words of Peter: "For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead,

that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. 4: 3-6.) This is sufficient to cause thoughtful people to abandon the wicked ways of the world.

Another cause for the evil ways of the Gentiles, which Paul names is being darkened in their understanding, and alienated from the life of God. When people lose their sense of direction and their life-line is severed, there is no limit to the evil in which they will engage. Ignorance is another reason for the sinful conduct, and when the heart has lost all feeling, then the case is hopeless. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 2.)

When One Puts Off the Old He Must Put On the New

(Eph. 4: 20-24)

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.

People learn Christ when they are taught him. Paul told the Corinthians that he was "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2: 2); and when that kind of preaching is done, those who accept it have learned Christ. And inasmuch as Christ and the sinful world are diametrically opposed to each other, those who learn Christ, in the sense of accepting his way as their way, can no longer walk in sin. The salvation of the Ephesians was described by Paul in these words: "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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2: 8-10.)

These same truths are taught by Paul in the companion letter to the Colossians: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is,

seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col. 3: 1-4; read also verses 5-17.)

But life, even in this world, abhors a vacuum. Things invariably fall apart when people try to live in a spiritual vacuum. Life demands, and indeed must have, something at its center to which it can devote itself; and if it is not something good, then it will be something bad. Life abhors a vacuum, let it be repeated, and sets about at once to fill it with whatever material that may be at hand. This is enough to show that negative goodness is not enough. After getting rid of thought, habits, and way 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.

That which has just been said is the plain and specific teaching of both Jesus and Paul on the subject now in hand. In his brief parable in Matt. 12: 43-45, Jesus says, "But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taken with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first." If the evil had been replaced with good, there would have been no room for the evil spirits when they returned.

Removing the evil and replacing it with good is taught by Paul in 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 world." Uprooting sins is indeed to be commended, providing that one begins 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, et cetera. If religion is to be a power for good, 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. Or, to state the same thing in another way, there must be something which we believe, in the full meaning of that term. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; James 2: 22-24.)

The Method by Which Christian Character Is Developed

(Eph. 4: 25-32)

Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need. Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.

That which is contained in this section of the lesson text is a practical application of putting off the old, and putting on the new; and it may be spoken of as the apostle's advancement from the general to the particular. The people to whom Paul wrote had been converted to Christ, but that, in and of itself, does not mean that they had completely broken every evil habit which had characterized their former manner of living. The gospel net catches all kinds of people, some liars, others thieves, etc.; and while the Lord both expects and requires

that they live the new kind of life, which is in Christ, yet it is evident that it takes time for a man who has lived in sin all of his responsible life, up to the time of his conversion, to adjust his life in keeping with Christian principles. Furthermore, there are many people who were sincerely converted at the time of their acceptance of the gospel, who later on fell back into the ways of sin. And so, whether the need is for time to make adjustment to righteous living, or to return to the favor of the Lord, that which Paul says in this section of the lesson text is equally applicable to the case in hand.

The apostle, in the paragraph now before us, for the most part states the sinful practice which needs to be corrected, and then states the condition or practice which should replace it. For example, if one is guilty of falsehood, put that away, and begin to speak truth with his neighbor. The expression "for we are members one of another" is very significant. The church is a unified organism; and for one to be false to any member of the body, is equivalent to being false to himself. This is forcefully illustrated by the advance which Shakespeare makes Polonius give to his son Laertes, namely.

This above all: to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

It appears that "sinless anger" is equivalent to *righteous indignation*, and any one who is acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament, knows that such an attitude is not wrong. However, that feeling or mood should not be unduly prolonged—"let not the sun go down upon your wrath"—; and if one will make certain that he is following that rule, the likelihood is that he will not be guilty of wrongdoing, while manifesting a sinless anger. Stealing and evil speech are the other two which belong to the group of four common sins, which the apostle urged his readers to lay aside. And if that is done, the devil will not find it easy to lead one into sin.

Grieving the Spirit is the first of three sad words (the other two are *resisting* the Spirit, and *quenching* the Spirit) which mark the pathway of evil. The apostle concludes that we must remove any and everything from our hearts, which will have a hardening effect upon them; and it is then that our attitude toward oth-

ers will be like that which God manifests toward us. Jesus emphatically states that he who will not forgive others, cannot have forgiveness for God. (Matt. 6: 14, 15.) And in the words of George Herbert, "He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself."

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the scriptural basis for the admonitions to purity and faithfulness?

Why are God and the world diametrically opposed to each other?

What, then, must be the attitude of the Christian toward the world?

What was Paul's motive for urging purity and faithfulness on the part of God's people?

What will be the final moral and spiritual condition of those who are saved in heaven?

The Golden Text

What is always essential before one can be restored from sin to the likeness of God?

What great privilege is made possible for the redeemed in Christ?

In what way does John speak of the future of those who are faithful in Christ?

What great motive, then, is given for purity of living while in this world?

Old Gentile Vices Must Be Renounced

What is the general nature and purpose of the Ephesian Letter?

What principal lesson does one learn by reading the first three chapters of the epistle?

What is contained in the first sixteen verses of chapter 4?

What is the purpose of the following sections of the epistle?

What radical change is brought about in an individual when he obeys the gospel?

In what kind of world do we live?

What was the principal cause of the sinful condition of the Gentile world?

In what way did Paul and Peter describe the people of their age?

What else did Paul say about the reasons for the terrible condition of the world?

When One Puts Off the Old He Must Put On the New

What is the divine plan for learning Christ?

What does it mean to learn Christ?

What happens to the lives of people when they learn him?

Why can't people who have accepted Christ continue to live in sin?

What is the real source of our spiritual life?

In what way does the world, both physical and spiritual, feel toward a vacuum?

Why is this true?

What does Jesus teach regarding this question?

Why is uprooting sin not enough?

What is the true meaning of righteousness?

What must be done, if religion is to be a power for good?

The Method by Which Christian Character Is Developed

What was Paul's purpose in writing this section of the lesson text?

Why tell members of the church that they must give up certain sins and replace them with virtues?

What is "sinless anger"?

Why is it so essential for Christians to forgive others?

Lesson IX—December 1, 1968

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR

Lesson Text

Eph. 6: 10-20

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 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 per-

severance 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Fight the good fight of the faith."* (1 Tim. 6: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 6: 1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

November 25. M.....	Victory of Faith (1 John 5: 1-5)
November 26. T.....	Good Fight of Faith (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)
November 27. W.....	Kingdom Not of This World (John 18: 35-38)
November 28. T.....	Paul's Good Fight (2 Tim. 4: 6-18)
November 29. F.....	Devotion to Duty (2 Tim. 2: 4-10)
November 30. S.....	A Good Soldier (2 Tim. 2: 1-3)
December 1. S.....	Weapons Not Carnal (2 Cor. 10: 1-6)

TIME.—A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and those 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. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly apparent that the greater our efforts 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 therefore a life and death struggle 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 his stand, either for or against the Lord (Matt. 12: 30); but it is good to know that the Lord and those who are identified with him will ultimately win the struggle. (Read Rev. 20: 1-10.)

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 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 even 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 (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and made ready for a home with him in heaven; and any thoughtful and honest person knows that that involves the greatest conflict in which mankind can engage. The sacrifices and dangers in such a struggle are comparable to, if indeed they are not greater than, those which belong to carnal warfare. 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 is indicated by the subject, has to do with the Christian's side of the struggle between right and wrong, and especially with reference to his armor; and, as it has already been implied, we shall consider it from the standpoint of Paul's well known and favorite figure, namely, 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 conflict in which he is engaged. The principal phase of army life is, of course, 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, and especially the armor, that we are to deal with 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, husbandman, a household vessel, and a bondservant. However, it is to the first figure that the apostle returns again and again; for it appeals 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: 4.) 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 the faith, is that which is found in the latter part of his last letter to Timothy, namely:

"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.)

In urging Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith," the reference is to the good fight 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, which is also in the Greek, points to a definite or specific fight, namely, 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 apostle 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 adapt the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes, "There is no discharge" in this fight of the faith. (Eccles. 8: 8.)

The Text Explained

The Whole Armor of God Is

Indispensable
(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 darkness, 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.

In an earlier part of the epistle from which the lesson text for today is taken, Paul prayed for the strengthening of the brethren to whom he wrote; and it appears quite reasonable to take that prayer as an explanation of his meaning of being "strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might," as set forth in the passage now under consideration. The prayer just referred to 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. It was pointed out in a previous lesson that this spiritual aspect of life, 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, too 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 experience of the Israelites, who wanted to be like the nations around them; and it is also the experience of many congregations of the Lord's people today.

In saying that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood," the

apostle Paul makes it plain that the Christian warfare is not on a human level. If this warfare were on a human level, then human strength could be relied upon in waging it. (Cf. John 18: 36.) But as it is, 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 Colossians 1: 16; 2: 10 that all principalities and powers, of whatever rank they may be, are under Christ; 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. (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.)

The Various Parts of the Divine Equipment

(Eph. 6: 14-17)

Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and 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.

If we count prayer, as we should, and which will be considered in the

next section of the lesson text, then there are seven parts of the armor which the successful soldier of the Lord's army must have. (1) *"Having girded your loins with truth."* The girdle of the Roman soldier, who was being used by Paul to illustrate his instruction regarding the Christian soldier, was not simply an 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 his clothing in place. The truth is God's entire revelation, as contained in the Bible, with particular emphasis on the portion of the revelation which came through Christ and the apostles, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. 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 Jesus; or, which is the same thing, the agreement of our convictions with the divine revelation. (Cf. John 8: 31, 32.)

(2) *"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 the term "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 which is to come. (Cf. Matt. 28: 20; Rom. 8: 28, 31-39.) There is nothing which can take the place of being and doing right in the Christian's struggle against the enemies of truth and righteousness.

(3) *"Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* The soldier who makes a determined stand against the enemy of the cause which he represents, must have his feet protected; for without this protection he could not move with quick and certain steps. (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.)

(4) *"Taking up the shield of faith."* Then, besides or in addition to (that is the meaning of "withal") those parts of the armor which are worn on the body, an essential item of the Roman soldier's equipment was his shield. This part of the armor was oblong in shape, and was large enough to afford protection for the whole body. The shield 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 and confidence which makes him sensitive to holy influences which neutralize and defeat the power of temptations and other evil influences which beset the child of God. Genuine faith enlists the direct help of God in overcoming these "fiery darts of the evil one." (Cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; 2 Pet. 2: 9; James 1: 2-8.)

(5) and (6) *"Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* 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" (*analambano*) in verses 13, 16. Verse 16 has the participial form, while verse 17 has the direct imperative. The idea in verse 17 is for the Christian soldier to *take up* or *receive* something. In the preceding verses, referred to above, he is exhorted to do something himself, that is, something which he can do—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. (1 Thess. 5: 8.) The knowledge of salvation, which can come only from the Lord (cf. Eph. 2: 8; Tit. 3: 5), enables the Christian soldier to hold up his head with joy and confidence, as the Scriptures continue to assure him. The sword of the Spirit is described as the word of God; and it is the weapon which the Spirit himself has forged and made available to the soldier of the cross. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

The Place of Prayer in the Fight of the Faith

(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.

After the soldier of the cross is fully equipped with the armor which he must wear and use, he is exhorted to pray. To quote Bruce again, "Paul now passes from metaphor to the literal language of the spiritual conflict. When 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—*proseuchē* and *deesis*—*καὶ ἡ ὁρὴ* to 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, that is, as he directs. (Cf. Rom. 8: 26, 27; Luke 18: 1-8.)

Thus, prayer and supplication do not indicate two different kinds of praying. As used in the text, prayer appears to be general, while supplication is specific. Or, to state the same thing in another way, *prayer* covers the entire ground of our communion with God, while *supplication* has reference to the specific requests which we make. (Cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7.) Prayer and watchfulness must be combined. Every phase of prayer must be used to rout the enemy. 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." (*Ephesians*, p. 433.)

The Christian soldier must manifest his continuous alertness toward 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. The inspiration which he possessed and enjoyed made known God's will regarding mankind, and that which he himself should do about their salvation; but he realized his own human limitations, and asked for 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. (Cf. Acts 18: 5f.)

In commenting on Paul's request for prayers for himself, David 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." (*New Testament Epistles*, Vol. IV, p. 135.)

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; but there is not one word to encourage him to relax his

efforts, to say nothing of giving up the fight. Thus, not only have no provisions been made for turning back, the Lord has revealed his 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 soldier of the cross is sometimes made the

target of attack from the rear, that is, from those of his own brethren. Such a situation is sad, of course; but if the soldier of the Lord remains faithful to his trust, or, which is the same thing, continues his good fight of the faith, and does not retaliate, his reward will be great. (Cf. Matt. 5: 38, 39; Luke 6: 22, 23.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What does the average person realize as he continues to live in this world?
Why are faithful Christians so often persecuted?
What responsibility therefore comes to every accountable person?
What blessed assurance do the faithful in Christ have?
Why did Paul so often use the Roman soldier to illustrate his teaching?
What does the Bible say regarding Christians and carnal warfare?

The Golden Text

What was Paul discussing when he wrote the words of the golden text for today's lesson?
What are some of the references which he made to the Christian minister under the figure of a soldier?
What was his most outstanding statement along this line?
What is the good fight of the faith?
What further instruction did Paul give Timothy, when he wrote the words of the golden text?

The Whole Armor of God Is Indispensable

For what had Paul previously prayed on behalf of those to whom he wrote this epistle?
What relationship does that prayer have to this section of the lesson text?
What kind of life must be lived, if one is to please God?
Why do so many people turn to the material things of the earth, instead of seeking for the deeply spiritual, as it is revealed in Christ?
What are some forceful illustrations of this practice?
What does Paul mean by saying that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood?

Why is there such a conflict between God and the powers of the world?
Who is the leader of the hosts of wickedness?
Why, then, is the whole armor of God so sorely needed by his people?

The Various Parts of the Divine Equipment

How many different parts of the armor did Paul mention?
What does it mean for one to gird his loins with truth?
What is the truth which the Christian soldier must use for this purpose?
What is the purpose of the breastplate of righteousness?
Why is this part of the armor so important?
How does one shoe his feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace?
What is the shield of faith and what is its purpose?
What difference is noted with reference to the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit?

The Place of Prayer in the Fight of the Faith

Why is prayer so essential to the soldier of the cross?
What is suggested by the conjunction of prayer and supplication?
What does it mean for one to pray in the Spirit?
To what use must every phase of prayer be put, according to the teaching of Paul?
What does the apostle mean by "watching" and "perseverance"?
What attitude must the Christian soldier always manifest toward his comrades in the fight of the faith?
Why did Paul request prayer for himself?
Why were no provisions made for the retreat of the soldiers of the cross?
Under what conditions are they sometimes made the object of attack from the rear?
What should be their attitude regarding that kind of treatment?

Lesson X—December 8, 1968

PAUL WRITES TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Lesson Text

Phil. 1: 1-11

1 Paul and Tim'o-thy, servants of Christ Je'-sus, to all the saints in Christ Je'-sus that are at Phi-lip'pi, with the bishops and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,

4 Always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy,

5 For your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now;

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the days of Je'-sus Christ:

7 Even as it is right for me to be

thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace.

8 For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Je'-sus.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment;

10 So that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Je'-sus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For to me to live is Christ."* (Phil. 1: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 1: 12-30.

Daily Bible Readings

December 2. M.....	Paul in Philippi (Acts 16: 9-12)
December 3. T.....	First Conversions in Philippi (Acts 16: 13-15)
December 4. W.....	Persecution in Philippi (Acts 16: 16-24)
December 5. T.....	Paul and Silas Released (Acts 16: 25-28)
December 6. F.....	Jailor Converted (Acts 16: 29-34)
December 7. S.....	Paul and Silas Leave Philippi (Acts 16: 35-40)
December 8. S.....	Philippi's Contributions to Paul (Phil. 4: 14-20)

TIME.—A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Philippians was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The city of Philippi was about ten miles inland from its seaport town Neapolis. The two municipalities were separated by a mountain range, the pass over which was about sixteen hundred feet above sea level; and they were connected by a section of the great Roman highway, known as the Egnatian Road. Philippi passed from a comparative state of oblivion in 42 B. C., when the battle between Octavius and Antony, on the one side, and Brutus and Cassius, on the other, was fought in its vicinity. Brutus and Cassius were two of Julius Caesar's leading assassins, while Octav-

ius and Antony were two of his leading avengers.

Later, when Octavius became Augustus Caesar, the Greek city of Philippi attracted his attention; and, having to find places of settlement for Italian soldiers who had served their time and could not be maintained in Italy, he established at Philippi, among other towns, a Roman colony, to which he granted the *jus italicum* as an attraction to settlers. This privilege included (a) exemption from the oversight of the provincial governor, (b) immunity from the poll and the property taxes, (c) rights to property in the

soil regulated by Roman law." (*The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. III, p. 399f.) However, since the days of Paul, the deterioration of Philippi has been so complete, as to leave no knowledge of its ultimate destruction. There are many ruins, but no systematic excavations have been carried out; and there are few, if indeed any, inhabitants there now. The sun has long since set for that ancient, but well known and highly interesting city.

It was during Paul's second missionary journey, in A. D. 52, that he first visited Philippi with the gospel of Christ. He and his companions, Silas and Timothy, had passed through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they were come

over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. It was at the latter city that Paul had his vision of the man of Macedonia calling for help, which resulted in the conclusion that God was calling them to preach the gospel to the people of that country. The first of the famous "we" passages of the Book of Acts, indicate that Luke, the author of that volume, joined the missionaries at Troas and accompanied them to Philippi. The account of their arrival in the city, and their experience while there, including the beginning of the Philippian church, is set forth in the sixteenth chapter of Acts.

The Golden Text

"For to me to live is Christ." After referring to the motives of some of his contemporaries who preached Christ, Paul says, "What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1: 15-21.)

To paraphrase and adapt the words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the face of all the world was changed for Paul, when he first heard the footsteps of Christ in his soul; or to express the same thing in another way, Paul had something to live for, as well as to die for, when Jesus came into his life. *The Interpreter's Bible*, commenting on the words of the golden text, notes that a two-hundred year old grandfather clock, has a reason for existence, after all the changes which have come over the world during the time of its service. The mechanism of that old clock uses the eternal force of gravity to indicate God's time to man. And with no

hurry or worry, that old timepiece has met the unknown future by doing each second of the day and night that which its reason for living required. Not a single book on worry and peace of mind had to be written for that old clock. And so, amid all family contingencies, whether anxious or joyous, through sun and storm, in war and peace, it has continued to manifest the reason for its existence, namely, "tick-tock." That, indeed, is a rather dull life; but it is a truth that all men need some reason for existence.

Any thoughtful observer knows that there are people in practically every community who do not have a worthwhile purpose for living; but sooner or later, events will drive most of them into a corner, and demand of them if they have a reason for living. Such a question is as searching as the one Hamlet asked, namely,

To be, or not to be; that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heart-ache and the thousand
natural shocks
That flesh is heir to? 'Tis a con-
summation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

But that the dread of something
after death,

The undiscover'd country from
whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the
will
And make us rather bear those ills
we have
Than fly to others that we know not
of?

The Text Explained

The Salutation

(Phil. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul and Timothy, servants of
Christ Jesus, to all the saints in
Christ Jesus that are at Philippi,
with the bishops and deacons:
Grace to you and peace from God
our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.*

After arriving in Philippi, Paul and his companions tarried there for certain days; and on the sabbath day they went forth without the gate by a riverside, where they supposed there was a place of prayer. When they arrived there, they sat down, and spake unto the women who had gathered there. Nothing is said regarding the number of Jews who were in the city of Philippi; but from the fact that no mention is made regarding a synagogue there, it is generally supposed that the Jewish population was too small to support a synagogue. At any rate, the women who had gathered at the place of prayer, and who were evidently Jewish women, were apparently faithful to their conviction, and maintained this place of prayer outside the city by the side of a river. As long as he could do so, in keeping with the will of the Lord, Paul went first to the Jews, before preaching to the Gentiles. (Cf. Acts 13: 44-47.)

The first meeting which Paul and the other missionaries had with the people of Philippi resulted in the conversion of Lydia and her household, who were apparently the first fruits of Macedonia. Paul and those with him continued to frequent the place of prayer; and it is fair to conclude from Acts 16: 16-18, that he continued to preach to the people who would listen to him. The incident regarding the maiden with the spirit of divination resulted in the punishment and imprisonment of Paul and Silas, but that led to the conversion of the jailor and his

household, and possibly that of the maid. Thus, as a result of the labors and sufferings of Paul and his companions in Philippi, the word of the Lord prevailed, and a church of the Lord was established there; and we know from that which is said in this section of the lesson text, that the church was, in due time, fully set in order, with "bishops and deacons." This is the one place in the New Testament where an inspired writer refers to all the people who make up a church of the Lord's people who are "organized" according to his will.

The apostle Paul frequently referred to the Lord's people as "saints," but it is very evident that what he meant by that term is very different from the idea which is popularly associated with it today. According to the thinking of many religious people, a saint is one who has lived his life here, and has departed this world to be with the Lord in glory. But if one is willing to read that which the New Testament says about the subject, he will soon see that the term is applied, not to the holy dead, but to the consecrated living, or to the Lord's people—to those who have been set apart unto him. Thus, we read of the "poor among the saints" who needed the financial help of their brethren. There were saints in the busy centers of life, such as Rome, Corinth, Colossae, and Thessalonica. The saints in Philippi were living their lives, not in "the Garden of God," but in a Roman military city, with its vices and superstitions, its angry mobs, its marketplace, its inner prison. At least one of those saints in Philippi was a merchant-woman, another was the jailor, while a third may have been the property of a slave-owner.

John Milton, in his pamphlet, *Areopagitica*, in which he advocated freedom of the press, said, "I cannot

praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." A man is a saint, then, not because his heart is spotless, and his hands have always been clean; not because he can call God to witness that he has always been that which he should have been; but because he has been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and has been separated unto God. If one will read the letters which Paul wrote to the Corinthians, it will be easy for him to see that saints are sometimes far from being that which God wants them to be; but they are his people, and efforts will continue to be made to bring them back into full and complete fellowship with their heavenly Father.

The Apostle's Thankfulness and Joy

(Phil. 1: 3-8)

I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus.

Even a cursory reading of the Epistle to the Philippians will show that it is largely a letter of joy and thankfulness. The epistle which we are to study during the remainder of this quarter, has been called Paul's love letter; and it is a fact, worthy of notice, that there is not a single rebuke in the entire epistle. The nearest thing that comes to such a statement is found in the apostle's exhortation to two of the women to be of the same mind. (Phil. 4: 2, 3.) It is not surprising therefore that Paul had occasion for joy and

thanksgiving, every time of thought of the brethren in Philippi. And it was for the same reason that he never ceased to pray for them, always making his supplication with joy.

The word "fellowship" means joint participation, and that apparently is the sense in which Paul used the term in the section of the lesson text now under consideration. The apostle Paul felt himself under obligation to preach the gospel, and he endeavored to discharge his obligation by communicating it to others by word of mouth, or in any way he could reach*, those who needed its blessings; and in a similar way, the brethren in Philippi felt that they too were obligated to see that the gospel reached others, and they used whatever means they had to discharge their responsibility. It appears that the particular form which their efforts took was that of contributing money, praying, and manifesting an attitude toward Paul which always made him rejoice. Both Paul and the Philippian brethren were working toward the same goal, and their joint efforts were a demonstration of the kind of fellowship which is pleasing to the Lord.

The same original word for "fellowship" is found in Acts 2: 42, where Luke says that the early church "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers"; and Vincent, in commenting on the term fellowship, says, "A relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other. The word answers to the Latin *communio*, from *communis*, *common*. Hence, sometimes rendered *communion*, as

1 Cor. 10: 16; 2 Cor. 13: 14. *Fellowship* is the most common rendering. Thus Phil. 1: 5: 'Your *fellowship* in the gospel,' signifying *co-operation* in the widest sense; *participation* in sympathy, suffering, and labor. Compare 1 John 1: 3, 6, 7. Occasionally it is used to express the particular form which the spirit of fellowship assumes; as in Rom. 15: 26; Heb. 13: 16, where it signifies the giving of alms, but always with an emphasis upon the principle of Christian fellowship which underlies the gift."

The reason why the Philippian brethren could manifest such an attitude toward Paul and the spreading of the gospel, was due to a deeper fellowship which they enjoyed. In his *Lectures on Philippians*, Robert Johnstone notes that "the 'fellowship' of these brethren was, first and fundamentally, *with Christ*. They had been brought, in the measure of their faith, into unity of view and unity of will with him; and therefore with him, guided by his wisdom and sustained by his strength, were exerting themselves in his cause. They had learned to regard sin in the light in which he regards it. Wherever and in whatever form it showed itself, in themselves or in others, they saw it to be exceedingly evil, utterly and only evil. By this oneness of view with their Lord they were naturally impelled to oneness, or 'fellowship,' of action. They felt it to be most reasonable that if he, to overthrow sin, gave himself up to death, and now is ever pleading through his Spirit with gospel hearers, knocking at the door of their hearts, all who think with him should join him in his work of love." And inasmuch as Paul was a servant of Christ, engaged in the work which the Lord gave him to do, the very least they could do was to join hands with him in that great undertaking. This should be an impressive lesson to us today.

Jesus was the "author" of the faith which the Philippians had accepted, and Paul was also certain that he would be its "perfecter," that is, he would finish or bring to completion the system by which men are saved (cf. Heb. 12: 2); and what was true of the scheme of redemption itself, would also be true of the individual Christians themselves: hence, "being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Philippian brethren were giving a living demonstration that the work which the Lord began in them (Eph. 2: 10; Phil. 2: 13) was moving forward; and with the attitude which they were manifesting, he was certain that they would do their part to make it possible for the Lord to continue the good work (cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3-11).

It appears that Paul's grounds for his thanksgiving and joy were (1) his remembrance of them—what they had become and what they were doing, and (2) the happy future which he could confidently anticipate for them; or, to state the same thing in another way, he was happy for and with them both in retrospect and in prospect. It is very probable that Paul's use of the expression "you all" indicated that he had in mind each individual member of the Philippian church, and not merely the church as a whole. The apostle called upon God as a witness, which was a form of oath.

Paul's Prayer for His Philippian Brethren

(Phil. 1: 9-11)

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Paul, throughout the previous section of the lesson text, made it plain that the Philippian brethren were always in his prayers; but he wanted to be more specific and let them know some of the things for which he prayed. His confidence in them was at a high level, as has already been pointed out; but the apostle was not blind to the fact that they were, after all, human beings, and needed to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Paul offered a similar prayer for the Ephesians, as we saw in a previous lesson, and in that prayer he said:

"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 men; 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.)

There is no place in the Christian life for the child of God to relax his efforts to continue his growth into the likeness of the Lord; and when we think of the many decisions which must be made all along the pathway of life, it becomes increasingly apparent that our love for God and our fellow men, and especially those of the household of the faith, must "abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment." The original word for "discernment" occurs only here in the New Testament, and it denotes moral understanding, insight, or sensitive moral perception. Thus, when love displays itself in knowledge and moral understanding, it will be able to discover or ascertain that which will be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. It is, of course, possible for one to have a fairly clear understanding of general principles, and yet not be able to see their true and practical application to specific instances as they occur in life.

James writes in a similar manner, namely, "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1: 5-8.) The term "wisdom" is employed by James in the sense of good judgment in the face of the demands made by human, and especially by the Christian life, or the knowledge and practice of the requisites for godly and upright living.

The reason why Paul wanted his brethren in Philippi to approve the things that are excellent, was that they might be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Cf. Col. 1: 9-14; James 3: 13-18.)

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is known about the early history of Philippi?
Under what circumstances did Paul first go there with the gospel of Christ?
Who was with him at that time?
What made it a good beginning place for the work in Europe?

The Golden Text

How did Paul come to write the words of the golden text to the Philippian brethren?
Is it possible for people to have different motives for preaching the gospel today? Give reasons for your answer.
How did Paul come to have such a high and worthy motive for living?
Why should every person have something to justify his existence?
What often happens to people who are not properly motivated for living?
What is the greatest reason which any one can have to justify his existence?

The Salutation

Under what circumstances did Paul and his companions begin their work in Philippi?
What is implied by the fact that the worshippers were meeting outside the city for prayer?
What lesson should we get from the faithfulness of the women whom the missionaries found?

What was the result of the first efforts of Paul and his helpers in Philippi?
Why do gospel preachers and other faithful Christians sometimes have to suffer before reaching some people with the gospel message?
What do we know of the church in Philippi at the time Paul wrote this letter?
When is a congregation of the Lord's people fully set in order?
In what sense did Paul use the term "saints" in writing the letter now before us?
What mistaken idea do many people have regarding the meaning of that word?

The Apostle's Thankfulness and Joy

What is largely true of the letter which Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren?
What unusual expression has been applied to it and why?
What is the meaning of the term "fellowship," as Paul used it?
Why is fellowship so essential among the Lord's people?
What deeper fellowship characterized the Philippian saints and what effect did it have on them?
How did Paul feel toward the future of the Lord's people to whom he wrote?
What, then, were the grounds for the apostle's thanksgiving and joy?

Paul's Prayer for His Philippian Brethren

After referring to the fact that he continually prayed for the Philippian Chris-

tians, what particular thing did he want them to be assured of?
 Aside from his joy and thankfulness, why did Paul continually pray for the Philippians?
 Why do Christian people need to have their spiritual vision enlarged?
 What does Paul mean by knowledge and all discernment?

How can the Lord's people increase their knowledge?
 How do they go about increasing their discernment?
 What does James say about the same general question?
 Why did Paul want the Philippian brethren to be able to approve the things that are excellent?

Lesson XI—December 15, 1968

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.—*"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 2: 12-18.

Daily Bible Readings

December 9. M.....Christ, Our Example (1 Pet. 2: 21; 1 Cor. 11: 1)
 December 10. T.....Christ, Our Example in Prayer (Matt. 26: 36-46)
 December 11. W.....Christ, Our Example in Obedience (Heb. 10: 1-7)
 December 12. T.Christ, Our Example in Forgiveness (Luke 23: 33-38)
 December 13. F.....Christ, Our Example toward the Erring (Luke 17: 36-50)
 December 14. S.....Christ, Our Example toward Error (Matt. 15: 1-20)
 December 15. S.....Christ, Our Example in Compassion (Matt. 20: 29-34)

TIME.—A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Philippians was written in 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. This 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 aban-

don 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.

(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 unwaveringly 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. (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

The Golden Text

"It is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

The immediate context of this passage includes verse 12; and both verses read as follows: "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." (Phil. 2: 12, 13.) This is a picture of what God expects of one in living the Christian life; and it reminds us of a statement which Paul makes in Ephesians 2: 8-10, namely, "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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."

When a person becomes a Christian, as the result of the new birth

(John 3: 3-5), he is then ready to begin living a new kind of life (Rom. 6: 3, 4). He has been created anew (2 Cor. 5: 17; Cf. Gal. 2: 20); and Paul, in Titus 3: 4-7, tells how this is accomplished. "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." The "washing of regeneration," which is water baptism; and "the renewing of the Holy Spirit" are the same as being "born of water and the Spirit." The original term for "renewing" means, according to Thayer, "a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better, . . . effected by the Holy Spirit, Tit. 3: 5." This new

life required new directions, new motives, and new activities (Eph. 2: 10); and the Lord has promised his help in these things (cf. Heb. 4: 12, 13).

Charles B. Williams calls the Christian life "the struggle stage of salvation. This stage of salvation is a process, extending from the moment of conversion to the day of death. It is characterized by struggle, temptation, conquests, achievements, all the way from regeneration to the resurrection. The first

stage is given in Eph. 2: 5, 8 (which see in our comments); the spiritual stage when the believer is saved by grace through faith; when he is born again. The new spiritual life imparted to the believer helps him save his character and conduct, his personality and his career. This is what Paul exhorts the readers to do: 'Keep on working down to the finishing point your salvation, for it is God himself who is at work in you to help you desire it as well as to do it.'"

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 severe 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. (Acts 16: 11-34.) A group of people so diverse in character as the Jewish Lydia, the slave

maiden, and the heathen, jailer—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), incentive, 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 lowli-

ness 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 rapier 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 crossbearing. 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 includes 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 man." (1 Tim. 2: 5.) Not only is Jesus the peacemaker between God and men (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18ff), 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 Philippians 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?
Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What does the apostle Paul mean by the "mind" of Christ?
What is the popular view of the mind or spirit of Christ?
How can we be certain about the true meaning of his mind or spirit?

The Golden Text

What is the principal thought which is set forth in the language of the golden text?
What happens to an individual when he becomes a Christian?
In what sense in such a person a new creature?
How may the Christian life be described with reference to the over-all subject of our salvation?
When does one reach the finishing point in his struggle stage of salvation?
What effect should the realization of these truths have on the Lord's people?

The Need for Self-Effacement

What was the evident reason for Paul's writing to Philippians as he did here?
What difference is seen between them and the Corinthians in this respect?
Why would a church like the one in Philippi be susceptible to troublesome situations?
What exhortations did Paul give to the Philippians with reference to unity?
What considerations did he name to aid them in their efforts in this endeavor?

What request did he make of them in his own behalf?

In what ways could they make full his joy?

What definite responsibility does each Christian have to his brethren?

The Mind of Christ Exemplified

What peculiar interest do we find in this section of the lesson text?

What is the meaning of the term "incarnation"?

Why was the incarnation of the Word essential to the salvation of the human race?

What did the Word lay aside, and not lay aside, in becoming flesh?

What was the background for Paul's mentioning the incarnation?

What other great even is did he refer to in this connection?

In what way did Paul want his Philippian brethren to cultivate the mind of Christ in themselves?

In what way did Christ humiliate himself?

What over-all motive should actuate the Lord's people in all of their service to him?

His Glorious Exaltation

On what basis was the exaltation of Christ made?

What did God decree in thus exalting him?

Who are included in the term "every"?

In what sense will the wicked, that is, the eternally lost, confess Jesus as Lord?

What is implied in, and indicated by, the name of Jesus?

What position does Christ occupy between God and men?

Upon what principle are the righteous rewarded and the wicked punished?

Lesson XII—December 22, 1968

ALL THINGS LOSS FOR CHRIST

Lesson Text

Phil. 3: 1-16

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision:

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Je'-sus, and have no confidence in the flesh:

4 Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Is'-ra-el, of the tribe of Ben'-ja-min, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Phar'-i-see;

6 As touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Je'-sus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, *even* that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death;

11 If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Je'-sus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I *do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before,

14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Je'-sus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you:

16 Only, whereunto we have attained, by that same *rule* let us walk.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me."* (Phil. 3: 17.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 3: 17-21.

Daily Bible Readings

December 16. M.....	Paul's Conversion (Acts 22: 3-21)
December 17. T.....	Paul's Divine Call (Gal. 1: 11-17)
December 18. W.....	Paul's Apostleship (Gal. 2: 1-11)
December 19. T.....	Paul's Trials (2 Cor. 11: 16-33)
December 20. F.....	Paul's Marks for Christ (Gal. 6: 12-18)
December 21. S.....	Paul's Defense (2 Cor. 11: 1-12)
December 22. S.....	Paul's Aim (Phil. 1: 20-25)

TIME.—A.D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Philippians was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

Introduction

Any kind of service which is acceptable to God must be properly motivated; or, to say the same thing in another way, there must be an adequate reason for anything which one does, if it is to be pleasing to God. For example, 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.) Even the greatest acts of devotion and sacrifice, if they are not motivated by love, will avail nothing, either in making one better or in pleasing God.

And so, when we talk about giving up everything for Christ, that is only a part of the story, John says that "we love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4: 19); or, as the apostle says earlier, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (Verse 10). There is no sacrifice which any one can make, no prized possession which he can give up, which can compare with the sacrifice which Christ made for us. The apostle Paul says, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5: 21); and again, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:

6-8; cf. John 3: 16.) Thus, not only did Christ give his life for sinful humanity; he did so willingly, as one may see from the following scripture, namely, "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.)

Therefore, when we speak of losing all things for Christ, we should make sure that what we are giving up is in consequence of his great sacrifice for us. Or, which is the same thing expressed in another way, If love for Christ moves us to give up everything for him, we should realize that our gain in the transaction is in direct proportion to his sacrifice. It was absolutely essential for Christ to make the supreme sacrifice, before we could be benefited by losing everything for him. (Cf. Rom. 3: 21-28.) Furthermore, Christ makes it perfectly clear in Luke 14: 25-35 that the cost to one is greater, if he refuses to make the sacrifice for the Lord, than it is in giving up all things for him. "So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"; and if one is not a disciple of Christ, his eternal lot will be with the devil and his angels.

The Golden Text

"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me." The very reading of the words which serve as the golden text for today bring to mind another statement by the same apostle, namely, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11: 1.) It is true that Paul did not say anything about his following Christ, when he asked the brethren in Philippi to imitate him; but he knew, of course, that they understood that he himself was continuously making every possible effort to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. That is the central idea of the epistle which he sent to them. "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that

with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1: 19-21.)

Moreover, the apostle Paul had just set down his philosophy of life, with reference to Christ, when he wrote the words of the golden text, as we shall see when we come to consider the lesson text for today's study. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) But it appears that the apostle's immediate aim, in asking the brethren to imitate him, was to warn them against some pseudo-disciples and immoral teachers, and to set before them to absolute need for their making the wise choice with reference to the example which would influence their lives. Paul, all through the epistle, had been impressing upon his readers the necessity for clear

views regarding personal holiness, and of persistent efforts to maintain a practice in keeping with those views; and now, as he continues his observations, he seeks to direct their thoughts to the influence of example.

If one will read the closing paragraph of Philippians 3 (verses 17-21), he can easily see the contrast between the two types of example which were before them. The whole letter to the Christians at Philippi was intended to strengthen them in their faith and practice; and the paragraph just referred to was a part of that general plan. The method by which Paul sought to accomplish his purpose at this point was to draw a contrast be-

tween the principle which animates the lives of sensual worldlings, and the principle which motivates the lives of faithful children of God. *They* "mind earthly things"; *our* "citizenship is in heaven." This contrast would at once place before the Philippian brethren their position, in a manner which would emphasize both their calling and their destiny; and would make it easy for them to see which example they should follow, and therefore to choose wisely with reference to it. They knew where Paul stood with reference to the things just mentioned; and they would therefore have no difficulty in choosing between him and those who have their minds on earthly things.

The Text Explained

A Warning: against Judaizers and the Ineffectiveness of Earthly Privileges

(Phil 3: 1-6)

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision: for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

In the midst of his practical exhortations and assurances, the apostle Paul suddenly changed the subject matter that of a warning against Judaizing teachers, and those who were advocating antinomianism, that is, those who were teaching that since salvation is already assured, there is no need for active Christian effort or morality. The sudden change in the subject matter, together with the fact that the expression "Finally, my brethren" occurs in the middle of the letter, as we now have it; and that a similar expression "Finally, brethren" oc-

curs again in 4: 8, has given rise to the idea that 3: 1-4: 1 may have belonged to another letter which Paul wrote to the Philippians. It is, of course, possible for such an idea to be true; but in the absence of more definite proof, we shall regard the letter to the Philippians, as we now have it, as a literary unit.

The Judaizing teachers were Paul's inveterate enemies. They did not regard him as being a genuine apostle of Christ; and that led them, of course, to regard his preaching as being both spurious and dangerous. It was their aim to destroy his work by inducing his disciples to repudiate both him and his teaching. A notable example of their efforts along those lines may be seen in the case of the churches of Galatia, and by reading Paul's letter to them. The fact that these Judaizing emissaries gained so great a hold over churches consisting mostly of Gentile Christians shows something of their indefatigable activity, as well as their skill in the art of conciliation and persuasion. It should be remembered, however, that they did not hesitate to employ unscrupulous means in their efforts to gain their ends. Paul did not grow weary in warning faithful brethren against these evil doers; for he knew that it meant their safety.

The section of the lesson text we are now considering is rendering by *The New English Bible* in these words: "To repeat what I have written to you before is no trouble

to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of those dogs and their malpractices. Beware of those who insist on mutilation—'circumcision' I will not call it; we are the circumcised, we whose worship is spiritual whose pride is in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in anything external. Not that I am not without grounds myself even for confidence of that kind. If anyone thinks to base his claims on externals, I could make a stronger case for myself: circumcised on my eighth day, Israelite by race, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born and bred Tor, as the margin has it, 'a Hebrew-speaking Jew of a Hebrew-speaking family'; in my attitude to the law, a Pharisee; in pious zeal, a persecutor of the church; in legal rectitude, faultless."

The three epithets which Paul used to describe the Judaizers are, as Williams' translation has it, dogs, mischief-makers, and those who mutilate their flesh—"Look out for those dogs, those mischief-makers, those self-mutilators!" **Dogs:** those who devour, and bite, snap, and bark, in their efforts to intimidate and destroy others. **Evildoers or mischief-makers:** those who practice deception (2 Cor. 11: 13), create division, by disturbing the faith and peace of mind of the Lord's people. **Unauthorized mutilators:** The original word for "circision" is found only here in the New Testament, and "the kindred verb occurs in the Septuagint only of mutilations forbidden by the Mosaic law." (Lev. 21: 5.) Paul refused to call such mutilations circumcision, saying, instead, that "we are the circumcision [an entirely different Greek word], who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

When Paul denounced the false teachers who had all but wrecked the church in Corinth, (he wanted the brethren there to know that he was "not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Cor. 11: 5; cf. 12: 11), whom he identified as false apostles (2 Cor. 11: 13.) And then in a similar vein, when he voiced his opposition to the trouble-makers, against whom he warned the Philippian brethren, he let them know that he indeed had a better ground

for boasting of fleshly attainments, than any of his opponents. (Phil. 3: 4-6.)

The Manner in Which Paul Made His Choice of Values

(Phil. 3: 7-11)

Howbeit what things were gained to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but what which is through faith in Christ] the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.

That which Paul did in renouncing everything for Christ, is in keeping with the statement made by Jesus, when he declared, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 16: 24, 25.) It is only through Christ that any one can reach God, where he can dwell with him for ever. Phillips renders the passage just quoted in these words: "If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps he must give up all right to himself, take up his cross and follow me"; while Goodspeed has it, "If any one wants to go with me, he must disregard himself and take up his cross and follow me." Thus, it can be seen that Jesus makes self-denial, not only an essential, but the first condition of discipleship; and that means the turning away from self, including any claim that one might have to salvation, to Christ; or, which is the same thing, from one center or leader to another.

When Paul wrote our Ephesians, he let it be known that salvation is the gift of God. "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" (Eph. 2: 8, 9); and

then, in his letter to Titus, the same apostle says, "Not by works done in righteous, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3: 5). God has made it abundantly clear that no one can be saved apart from Christ, and that simply means that one must come to him with no claim of his own merit whatsoever. (Cf. songs, *Rock of Ages* and *Just As I Am*.)

The righteousness which is of the law, and the righteousness which is through faith in Christ, are set over against each other; and they are fully discussed in the Book of Romans. Paul makes it plain in his letter to the churches of Galatia that no one was ever able to keep the law of Moses, to the extent that he could claim salvation thereby; and that is what he was saying to the Philippians, namely, that he made no effort whatsoever, after learning of Christ, to obtain righteousness before God by means of the law, but simply sought it through faith in Christ Jesus. And in doing this, he endeavored to become as nearly like Jesus, as it was possible for him to do. In commenting on "becoming conformed unto his death," Vincent notes that "the most radical conformity is thus indicated: not merely undergoing physical death like Christ, but conformity to the spirit and temper, the meekness and submissiveness of Christ; to his unselfish love and devotion, and his anguish over human sin."

Principles of Spiritual Progress

(Phil. 3: 12-16)

Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid held on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and, stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this also shall God reveal unto you: only, whereunto we have

attained, by that same rule let us walk.

Although the transition from his remarks regarding the Judaizers to those concerning the advocates of antinomianism was made in such a simple and matter-of-fact manner, it is apparent to the careful student that the change was made; and if one will take the time to examine, carefully, the subject matter in the second and third sections of the lesson text of this study, he will be able to see the difference between them; and especially, if he will read the remainder of chapter. While the Judaizers were unscrupulous, there is no evidence that they had as their god the belly, who gloried in their shame, and whose mind was on earthly things, as the people whom Paul condemned in the closing part of chapter 3 did.

An "antinomian" (from *anti*, against, and *nomos*, the law) is defined by *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* as "one who holds that, under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is of no use or obligation, faith alone being necessary to salvation." And so, without calling them by name, Paul used his own case, as he so often did, to denounce a vicious doctrine and practice of his day. If the teaching which these people advocated had been true, then they were indeed at liberty to give free rein to every passion which they possessed, and were under no obligation whatsoever to make any effort to strive for a better life. Their faith would have been sufficient to commend them to the favor of God.

But that was not Paul's view of the matter, and he used his own faith and practice to demonstrate God's will in such matters. The Lord Jesus Christ had laid hold on him, because of his great love for and his interest in him; and it was his constant aim in life to see that nothing which had made possible for him would be lost. (Cf. 2 John 8; 2 Cor. 5: 9; Rev. 3: 11.) And when the apostle said that he had not already "obtained," or had not already been made "perfect," he simply meant to say that he had not reached the place in his Christian life, where no further growth toward spiritual maturity was needed. There was still room for further de-

velopment, since he was not thin in a state of absolute spiritual maturity. And it was for that reason that he was under obligation to continue to "press on," so that he could appropriate and make his own that for which Christ "caught" him and made him his own.

The tense of the verb (first aorist passive of *katalambanō*) makes it clear that Paul was thinking of a definite historic event, namely, his conversion on his way to Damascus. The word, according to Thayer, means "to lay hold of so as to make one's own"; and the expression exactly describes that which happened to Saul of Tarsus. He was arrested in mid-career, as if some mighty hand had been placed upon him, with the result that the entire current of his life was changed. Saul left Jerusalem as an emissary of the high priest; but he entered Damascus as a humble, penitent believer in Christ. The change which took place in him was so sudden and complete, that the people could scarcely bring themselves to believe that it was true. (Acts 9: 26ff.)

The text plainly indicates that Christ had a definite purpose in view, when he laid hold on Paul. (Acts 9: 15.) But conversion is always purposeful. (1 Pet. 2: 9.) The scientists talk about the "transformation of energy"; and it may be well noted that that idea is also in conversion; for that is precisely what takes place when one undergoes this experience. (Rom. 6: 16-18; Gal. 1: 23.) Why, then, did Christ lay hold on Paul? (1) In order to bring him peace of mind.

(Rom. 5: 1; 7: 7ff.) (2) In order to make a new man out of him (2 Cor. 5: 17; Gal. 2: 20.) We have already seen that he no longer sought after righteousness, according to the standard of the adherents to the law. (Rom. 10: 1-4.)

(3) In order to make a missionary out of him. (Acts 26: 15-20.) And Paul, so far as he was concerned, saw to it that no effort which the Lord made was wasted on him.

It is interesting to note that there were definite principles by which Paul sought to direct his life, as, for example, (1) He had a definite purpose in mind: "one thing I do, ... I press on toward the goal." This grand old man of the faith always kept a great aim before himself. (2) He was independent of the past: "forgetting the things which are behind." He did not forget them in the sense of not being able to recall them; he simply did not depend upon them to compensate for any failure to keep on doing his full duty. (3) He continued to make an unceasing effort: "I press on toward the goal." Christian perfection, or maturity, can be reached only by a definite and strenuous endeavor. This is the "mind" which should characterize the mature children of God, in contrast with those who "mind earthly things"; and if there are those who are "otherwise minded," that is, immature, God will, if they continue in his word, reveal the truthfulness of that which Paul had just described as the only acceptable way of life unto them. (John 8: 31, 32; Rom. 8: 28; Matt. 28: 20.)

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why must all acceptable service to God be properly motivated?

What is the greatest motive which any man can have?

Why is any sincere and thoughtful person willing to give up everything for Christ?

How did God manifest his great love for us?

On what basis do we gain by giving up everything for Christ?

What does Jesus teach on this subject regarding counting the cost?

The Golden Text

Under what circumstance did Paul make a similar statement to that of the golden text?

Why, apparently, didn't he mention his following Christ to the Philippians?

What was the apostle Paul's greatest aim in life? Give reasons for your answer.

Why, apparently, did Paul ask the Philippian brethren to be imitators of him?

What were the two types of example that were before the Christians in Philippi?

Why was it relatively easy for them to select Paul as their example?

A Warning against Judaizers and the Ineffectiveness of Earthly Privileges

What has Paul's sudden change in subject matter led some people to think of his letter to the Philippians?

Why does it seem reasonable to accept the letter as a literary unit?

Who were the Judaizers and why were they such harsh enemies of Paul?

What methods did they usually follow in

their efforts to destroy his character and work?
 How did Paul speak of the Judaizers and what did he mean by the epithets he employed?
 How did Paul's grounds for boasting of earthly attainments compare with those of the opposition?

The Manner in Which Paul Made His Choice of Values

What teaching of Jesus did Paul comply with when he renounced everything for the Lord?
 What emphasis does Jesus give to the question of self-denial?
 What does it mean for one to deny himself?
 Since no one can be saved apart from Christ in what spirit must the sinner go to him?
 Discuss the contrast between the righ-

teousness which is of the law and that which is from God.
 Why was no one ever able to keep the law, so as to be saved thereby?
 What does it mean for one to become conformed unto the death of Christ?

Principles of Spiritual Progress

To what subject did Paul apparently turn in this section of the lesson text?
 Who were the people who advocated antinomianism and what did they teach?
 How did Paul go about condemning their doctrine?
 What motive did the apostle give for his continuous service to Christ?
 When, and under what circumstances did Christ lay hold on him?
 Why did the Lord lay hold on him?
 What were the principles which guided Paul in his service to Christ?
 What did he urge all of his Philippian brethren to do?

Lesson XIII—December 29, 1968

CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

Lesson Text

Phil. 4: 4-13, 21-23

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice.

5 Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Je'-sus.

8 Finally, brethren, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

10 But I rejoice in the Lord

greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content.

12 I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want.

13 I can do all things in him that strengthened me.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Je'-sus. The brethren that are with me salute you.

22 All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Cae-sar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Je'-sus Christ be with your spirit.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4: 21.)
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—Phil. 4: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

December 23. M..... Final Greetings to the Romans (Rom. 16: 1-27)
 December 24. T..... Salutations to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16: 15-24)
 December 25. W..... Close of the Galatian Letter (Gal. 6: 11-18)
 December 26. T..... "Peace Be to the Brethren" (Eph. 6: 21-24)
 December 27. F..... Exhortations to Timothy (1 Tim. 6: 14-21)
 December 28. S..... Faithful Sayings (Tit. 3: 8-15)
 December 29. S..... Paul's Final Admonitions (2 Tim. 4: 1-22)

TIME.—A D. 63 or 64.

PLACE.—Philippians was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

Introduction

If one will consider the facts in the case, it will not be difficult for him to reach the conclusion that "exhortation" is part and parcel of preaching; or, to say the same thing in another way, exhortation is an essential, or, which is the same thing, an integral, part of the over-all effort to get people to learn and accept the will of God. Four of the principal aims of preaching are

(1) to enlighten the mind, (2) to disturb the conscience, (3) to energize the will, and (4) to stir the heart. When once the mind has been enlightened by the truth of the Scriptures, and the conscience has been disturbed as the result of that which has been taught, both with reference to one's own moral condition and that which God expects and demands of him; it is then that the person involved needs to have his will energized and his heart stirred.

Exhortation, as we are considering the question today, is aimed at the feelings or sensibilities and the will, and the purpose of giving the exhortation is to incite and encourage to action. When one has been properly taught the truth of God, both with reference to himself and the will of the Lord, he will not be benefited thereby, unless he is, in some way, moved to the kind of action which is acceptable to the Lord. Some people, like Saul of Tarsus, for example, need only to learn the truth for them to act; but that apparently is the exception and not the rule. The devil, in one way or another, is forever trying to keep people from doing the will of God, and it is therefore relatively easy for many people to yield to his temptation and delay their obedience; and it is under such circumstances that God has ordained and provided for exhortation or, which is the same thing, encouragement.

Barnabas was a man with the gift of exhortation, as may be seen by reading Acts 4: 36, 37, namely, "And

Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." The marginal reading for "exhortation" in the passage just quoted is *consolation*, which is another aspect of the over-all meaning of the term we are now considering. When a teacher or preacher like Paul teams up with an exhorter like Barnabas great things are certain to happen. The story is told of a meeting in which David Lipscomb and E. G. Sewell did the preaching. The original plan was for Brother Lipscomb to do all the preaching; but a change was made and Brother Sewell was invited to have a part in the meeting.

The change just referred to came about in this way: Brother Lipscomb had preached about a week, with few, if indeed any, to respond to the gospel invitation. Whereupon Brother Lipscomb told the leaders of the church where the meeting was being conducted that he had taught the people the truth, but that it appeared that he would not be able to move them to accept it. He then proposed that he return home, and send Brother Sewell to finish the meeting; for he was certain that the latter could persuade many of the people of the community to obey the gospel. These plans were carried out; Brother Lipscomb returned home, told Brother Sewell of the proposal he had made, and asked him to continue and conclude the meeting. Brother Sewell agreed, and within a few days some fifty people were baptized. Brother Lipscomb was primarily a teacher of God's word, while Brother Sewell, in addition to that ability also had the power of persuasion. It would mean much to the cause of Christ today if congregations and preachers would recognize and put into practice this type of teamwork.

The Golden Text

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

The Text Explained

The Antidote to Anxiety

(Phil. 4: 4-9)

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.

When Paul wrote the words which have just been quoted, he was in a Roman prison; and, looking at the matter from the standpoint of the world, he had sufficient reason to be discouraged and pessimistic. He did not, of course, know what might happen to him, for the Roman authorities did not know and honor God as he did; and they were neither interested in the personal feeling of their prisoner nor the glory of God. For all that Paul knew about the matter, he might linger in the prison for years, or his life might be taken from him at any moment.

But Paul was not thinking in terms of the world; for he had long since learned to put his trust in the Lord (2 Tim. 1: 12); and he therefore had every reason to believe that whatever happened to him would result in God's glory and his good, including the progress of the gospel (Phil. 1: 12; Rom. 8: 28.) It was with this kind of confidence that he could urge his brethren in Philippi to rejoice in the Lord always; and in that way let all men know about the gentle disposition which they possessed under the most trying circumstances. (The marginal reading for "forbearance" is *gentleness*, which Arndt-Gingrich render "your forbearing spirit.") This attitude of mind implies a willingness to give and take, rather than a determination to stand rigidly on one's own rights. The Christians of Paul's day were surrounded by a heathen population, who neither understood nor appreciated their beliefs and practices. And it was for this reason that the Lord's people should always be patient amid such misunderstanding, so that those who opposed them, or at least failed to accept their way of life, will be able

to see that they are not mere religious fanatics.

Such patience, indeed, may often be difficult, but Paul reminds the followers of Christ that "the Lord is at hand." Bible students are not agreed as to the reference Paul had in mind, when he wrote the words just quoted. Some hold that the apostle was speaking of the second coming of Christ at the end of the world (James 5: 7, 8; 1 Cor. 16: 22), while others think that he may have been referring to the nearness of the Lord to his people to bless them (Matt. 28: 20; Matt. 18: 20). But in either case, faithful Christian people can and will find occasion to "rejoice in the Lord always." Paul was in prison when he wrote the epistle from which the lesson text is taken; but it is interesting to note that he called upon his beloved Philippians throughout the letter to rejoice.

Many of us today are like a man standing between two tall buildings; and when he sees a cloud in the narrow strip of sky above him, he is likely to think that the whole horizon is covered, and that storm warnings are in evidence everywhere. It is true that we are living in a troubled world, with anxiety and worry on every hand, and with multitudes of people seeking comfort for troubled minds, tense nerves, and worn-out spirits; but if these people will examine themselves carefully and honestly, many of them will have to admit that they are not putting their trust in the Lord as he has taught that they should. *The Interpreter's Bible* points out the fact that there is no end to the number of books which are concerned with fear and worry on the part of human beings; and that psychiatry has become the rival of religion in ministering to troubled minds. But, as we are able to see in this portion of the lesson text, the apostle Paul combined his joy in the Lord with deliverance from anxiety, and adds the familiar phrase which means almost nothing to a modern reader, namely, "The Lord is at hand."

Verses 6 and 7, of the section of the lesson text now before us, contain (1) a prohibition—"In nothing be anxious"; (2) a precept—"Let your

requests be made known unto God"; and (3) the result—"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. If one will read the New Testament, he will soon see that very often one is told not to do something, or to leave something out, so that he may do everything else. (See, for example, Tit. 2: 11, 12; Heb. 13: 5, 6; Rom. 12: 1, 2.) The prohibition which we are now considering is a universal and unconditional command of the Lord. Anxiety indicates a divided mind; and that kind of an attitude can never be pleasing to the Lord. (Matt. 6: 22-24; Luke 10: 38-42; James 1: 5-8.) There are some facts regarding anxiety which should be considered by every child of God. (1) *The prevalence of anxiety.* The world has never been so rich in material things, and possessed so many mechanical appliances for lightening human tasks and toils; yet people are more nervous than ever, and they apparently do not recognize the fact that worry, rather than work, wears out many before their time.

(2) *The folly of anxiety.* Any thoughtful person, aside from the teaching of the Scriptures, knows by his own experience that anxiety accomplishes nothing. Does anxiety for a train or a plane to arrive on time bring it any sooner; or is one helped by "crossing bridges" before he gets to them? As already indicated, anxiety weakens and wears one out prematurely; and that realization should make one appreciate the advice of Charles Kingsley, namely, "Do today's duty, fight today's temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them." (the farmer who set his alarm clock; and then sat up all night to make sure than he would hear it when it sounded!) Everyone, of course, can do his work better, if he does not allow his energy to go to waste in anxiety. (Cf. John 5: 30; 8: 29; and the perfect trust of a little child.)

(3) *The cause of anxiety.* The primary cause of anxiety is a lack of faith in God; but we should always keep in mind the fact that he has

not promised to do for us that which we can do for ourselves. If we will read the Bible, and accept that which it says, it will not be difficult for us to know something of the attitude which we should manifest regarding such matters. God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; and that should be enough to convince us that we should have no hesitation in placing ourselves within his jurisdiction. And when we add to that which has just been said the fact that God is good and only good, we should make every effort to place our trust in him, and in him alone; for we would know that he will not do anything but that which is best for us.

And when we come to consider the precept of the passage now before us, we should at once accept the truth that relief from anxiety can never be obtained by the efforts of our own wills, or by arguing its uselessness and harmfulness. The text, instead, makes known the only sure way of ridding ourselves of the plague. (1 Pet. 5: 5-7.) It appears that some people never think of taking "little troubles" to God; they seemingly feel that only the "big ones" should be brought to his attention. The means by which we should approach God regarding these matters are (1) *Prayer*. The original term indicates more of the mood of the petitioner than the petition. It describes his frame of mind—his confidence in God.

(2) *Supplication*, the meaning of which is that we put our anxieties into speech. One should be ashamed to entertain an anxiety about which he is unwilling to speak to God. (3) *Thanksgiving*. Never be moody or doubtful on the one hand, nor fail to be grateful for past blessings, and for the privilege of coming before God with anxieties, on the other. The phrase "in everything" indicates the scope of our intercourse with God.

Verse 7 of the passage now before us indicates the result of our taking things to God. The word "peace" is defined by Thayer to mean "the tranquil state of the soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatever sort that is." God's peace, as a sentinel, mounts guard over our lives.

(Isa. 26: 3, 4.) The story is told of a farm hand who had no difficulty in sleeping at night during a storm. The owner of the farm, on the other hand, could not sleep for worrying about whether or not he had closed a door at the barn, or had covered the haystack, or had done something else that needed to be done during such an emergency. Observing that his hired hand slept right through the storm, he asked him how he could do it; and he received this reply: "I always see that I do all that needs to be done before I go to bed; and then when the wind blows I know that I have nothing to worry about." And so, when the Christian does his duty, it is then that the peace of God guards his heart and his thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Any thoughtful person knows that "thinking" has a profound effect on one's life. (Prov. 23: 7); but the original term in the passage now before us is not concerned merely with *thinking*, as that word is generally understood. The basic idea in the Greek *logizomai* is to reckon, calculate, estimate, take into account, think about, ponder, or let one's mind dwell on. It is easy to see from that which is said in the previous part of the lesson text that the Christian's prime concern is with the peace of God; but there are other minor concerns which must be dealt with; and so Paul, as he sums up or concludes the exhortation which he has been giving the Philippians, tells them that they should have a few settled principles which should always guide them. The virtues or moral excellencies which Paul mentions here are illustrative of the settled principles which every child of God needs; and when they are woven into the fabric of living, the Christian will continue to enjoy and be guarded by the peace of God.

A Secret Worth Learning:

(Phil. 4: 10-13)

But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.

It has already been pointed out that the church in Philippi had a very special place in the heart and life of Paul. The church there was established in the midst of persecutions and sufferings, and it appears that the brethren there never ceased to sympathize and have fellowship with their father in the gospel, as they had opportunity. The occasion which called forth this letter was Paul's desire to thank the Philippian brethren for an offering which they had sent him, after a period during which they had not communicated with him; and lest they should feel that he thought they were indifferent toward him, he quickly added that they did indeed take thought, but they lacked opportunity.

And when Paul thanked his Philippian brethren for their kindness toward him, he also revealed to them the secret of the happiness which filled his heart. His secret was one which he had learned, or as the original has it, had been initiated into the mysteries; and to express the matter in another way, it is as if Paul had said, "I have been so disciplined by experience that whatsoever my lot may be, I can be contented therein." The basic meaning of "content," as used here by Paul, is *self-sufficiency*, or, which is the same thing, to be independent of circumstances.

The elements of Christian contentment, as stated by Paul, implies a state in which one is appeased to the point where he is not disquieted or disturbed by a desire for that which he does not have, however much he might need or like to have it. (Heb. 13: 5, 6; Matt. 6: 25ff.) A comparison of the term we are now

considering with the word *satisfaction* will bring it into focus. Satisfaction implies full appeasement, not only of one's desires, but also his needs. No one therefore will ever be fully satisfied in this life. (Psalm 17: 15.)

Contentment is a state which is peculiar to this life, and three of its basic ingredients are (1) *A realization of the fact that nothing of an earthly nature either last or satisfies.* Why not, then, acquiesce in whatever befalls us, since our earthly circumstances are relatively unimportant and insignificant. (2) *Confidence in the wise and loving providence of God.* The Father has a plan for every life; and if we are willing to do our part, there is nothing for us to fear. (Rom. 8: 28; Heb. 11: 6.) God is too wise not to know what is best for us; he is too good not to desire our highest good; and he is too powerful not to bring it about. He sees the end from the beginning; and when his plans have been fully unfolded, it will then be easy for us to see the truthfulness of the proposition we are now considering. (3) *The fact that we actually have God in our lives.* (2 John 9; John 14: 23.) If the words just referred to are real to us, then we must know that nothing which is finite is needed to supplement our hold upon the Infinite.

It will be relatively easy for us to see that which Paul's secret involved, if we consider it both negatively and positively. Looking at the question from the negative point of view, we note (1) that his contentment did not make him merely passive, a mere fatalist with a theory of God and the universe in which there was not place for individuality. Any one who reads the New Testament knows that Paul never sat idly by when the cause of Christ was at stake. (2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) (2) He did not become satisfied with himself. (Phil. 3: 12-14; 1 Cor. 4: 1-4.) (3) He did not merely become resigned to his fate. This carries with it the idea that one starts out to achieve a worthwhile goal in life; but because of difficulties which he encounters, he decides to accept something less, without making any further effort. Thus,

not only does such a person miss the prize; he also persuades himself to be satisfied with a failure. (Compare the ten spies who went into Canaan.) This often leads one to speak disparagingly of his original goal, as illustrated in Aesop's fable, "The Fox and the Grapes."

From the positive point of view, Paul had learned to live in prosperity, and also without those things which he could have used with profit. To live in prosperity means to have an abundance; but such a state does not always result in contentment. (Luke 12: 13-21.) But Paul had learned the secret of doing without many of the flings which others take for granted*. He learned to grow old gracefully, and to accept with gratitude those things which became his lot in life. And if one should ask, How did Paul come to learn this wonderful secret of contentment? the answer is, He did not seek contentment as an end, but it came to him as a result of his supreme confidence in the overruling providence of God, and his willingness to do his best in whatever state or condition that might be his. He had found religious certainty (2 Tim. 1: 12), and he was ever willing to leave the result with the Lord.

Parting Salutations and Benediction

(Phil. 4: 21-23)

Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren that are with me salute you. All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household.

It is always good to know that brethren in Christ can maintain and gratefully express a genuine interest in each other. In the words of John Fawcett, "Bless be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above."

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

It is altogether probable that the entire church in Philippi was gathered together, when Paul's letter was read to them; and it is not difficult to imagine the feeling which came over them, when this familiar benediction was pronounced upon them.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of our closing lesson for this year?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the meaning of "exhortation," as used in this lesson?

In what way is exhortation related to preaching?

What are four of the principal aims of preaching?

When does one need to have his will energized and his heart stirred?

At what, then, is exhortation directed?

Do all people need to be exhorted to do their duty?

Give reasons for your answer.

Give some example of the manner in which exhortation played a great roll in gospel preaching?

Why is it that many churches and preachers among us fail to realize the need for such cooperation?

The Antidote to Anxiety

Under what conditions did Paul write the words of our lesson text for today?

Why was he able to manifest so joyous a spirit under such circumstances?

What did Paul mean by telling the Philippian brethren to let their forbearance be known to all men?

How would such an attitude contribute to the advancement of the cause of Christ among men?

What did Paul say by way of encouragement in this respect?

What did he mean by saying that the Lord is at hand?

Why are so many of us so nearsighted in this respect?

What three propositions are set forth in verses 6 and 7?

Discuss each one of them separately.

What final admonition did Paul give as he closed his hortatory portion of the epistle?

What did he mean for them to do when he told them *to think* on these things?

A Secret Worth Learning

Why did the church in Philippi mean so much to Paul?

What had always been their attitude toward him and why?

What was the occasion which prompted the writing of Paul's letter to the Philippians?

At secret did he say that he had learned?

What is the meaning of "contentment" and what are its three basic "ingredients"?

Discuss Paul's secret from the negative and positive points of view?

What is the fundamental meaning of religious certainty?

What is the over-all value of the lesson for today to us?

Give reasons for your answer.

Parting Salutations and Benediction

What is implied by the salutations of so many to each other?

How do many congregations of the Lord's people generally feel toward their brethren today?

What can be done to improve this situation?

What is the meaning of the term "benediction"?

How must the Philippian brethren have felt when they heard the words read?