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

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# Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary

ON  
UNIFORM BIBLE LESSONS  
FOR THE  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1970

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

## FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL VOLUME

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## PREFACE

The Bible School Lessons for this year are again equally divided between the Old and the New Testament. The first quarter is devoted to a study of the history of the Northern Kingdom, beginning with the division of the original kingdom of Israel, which is also known as the United Kingdom. It appears that the entire history of the first kingdom was divided into three parts, of equal duration; and with three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon, each reigning for approximately forty years. Solomon was the wisest king who ever lived; but it was he who was directly responsible for the division which was brought about in the original kingdom.

The second quarter deals with three of the shorter epistles which Paul wrote. The first one which we are to study is the one written from the apostle's Roman prison, and addressed to the church which was located in Colossae, one of the cities which were located in the province of Asia. The instruction contained in this epistle is extremely important, since it deals with a human philosophy which threatened the very life of the church, and faith in Jesus Christ as God's Son, during Paul's day; and which is still relevant in our day. Human wisdom and man-made philosophy have been creeping upon that which the New Testament stands for; and it is only necessary for one to observe and to think, in order for him to see that many false theories are gaining in momentum.

The next two letters to be considered in the second quarter, are the two which were sent to the young church in Thessalonica; and, according to the information which we possess, these two epistles, which were written within the space of a relatively short time, were the first of Paul's long list of letters which he wrote to congregations and individuals, who were then engaged in the business of serving the Lord and learning how to deal with the problems of their day. The lessons of this quarter, when studied in the light of the full text of the epistles themselves, will enable the users to have a fairly good commentary on the three letters in question.

It is always in order to study the so-called Pastoral Epistles, since they deal with the question of leadership in the church, including the work of the elders, deacons, and preachers. No church is going to rise higher than its leaders; and if the Lord's people are going to be scriptural in organization and practice, they will have to be taught the truth in a proper and effective manner. The third quarter will cover the three epistles, already mentioned, that is, the two letters to Timothy, and the one to Titus.

The fourth quarter will consider the history of the Southern Kingdom, beginning with the actual split in the original kingdom, and ending with the rebuilding of the temple.

This is the forty-ninth annual volume, which the Gospel Advocate Company has published for use by churches of Christ; and it is the twenty-fifth 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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FIRST QUARTER  
HISTORY OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

Aim.—To observe, in Israel's rebellion against the Purpose and Plan of Jehovah, the tragedy of sin, and the folly of disobedience.

Lesson I—January 4, 1970  
DIVISION IN ISRAEL  
Lesson Text  
1 Kings 12: 16-20, 25-31

16 And when all Is'-ra-el saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jes'-se: to your tents, O Is'-ra-el: now see to thine own house, David. So Is'-ra-el departed unto their tents.

17 But as for the children of Is'-ra-el that dwelt in the cities of Ju'-dah, Re-ho-bo'am reigned over them.

18 Then king Re-ho-bo'am sent A-do'-ram, who was over the men subject to taskwork; and all Is'-ra-el stoned him to death with stones. And king Re-ho-bo'am made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Je-ru'-sa-lem.

19 So Is'-ra-el rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Is'-ra-el heard that Jer-o-bo'am was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Is'-ra-el: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Ju'-dah only.

\* \* \* \* \*

25 Then Jer-o-bo'am built She'-chem in the hill-country of E'-phra-im, and dwelt therein; and he went out from thence, and built Pe-nu'-el.

26 And Jer-o-bo'am said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David:

27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Je-ho'-vah at Je-ru'-sa-lem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'-dah; and they will kill me, and return to Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'-dah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Je-ru'-sa-lem: behold thy gods, O Is'-ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E'-gypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth'-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin; for the people went to *worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

31 And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Le'-vi.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Prov. 14: 34.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 12: 1-15.

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TIME.—975 B.C.  
PLACE.—Shechem.  
PERSONS.—Rehoboam, his advisors, Jeroboam, and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

If one will read the history of Bible times, it will not take him very long to see that the human race has never, for any appreciable period of time, been willing to follow the leadership of the Lord. And the same attitude was manifested after the close of the New Testament period. It would seem that men would learn, after so many bitter experiences, that disobedience does not pay; but that lesson has never been realized. Even today, in the people who claim to take the Bible as their only guide, glaring departures from the truth are in evidence in many areas. Liberalism is rapidly getting a strangle hold in many congregations, while the so-called "anti" elements do not hesitate to infiltrate churches, where efforts have long been made to do the work which the Lord has ordained for his people. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10.)

Any one who is acquainted with the Scriptures knows that it was never God's intention that his people be divided into two kingdoms (cf. 2 Sam. 7: 12-16); but when sin entered in among them, division was inevitable. Solomon, the third and final king of the united kingdom, departed from the way of the Lord, and thereby became responsible, not only for the loss of the kingdom, so far as his own descendants were concerned; but also for the division of the kingdom itself. "And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Jehovah commanded. Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have com-

manded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11: 9-13.)

This was the Lord's reason for dividing the kingdom, and it appears to have been based upon the same principle, which led to the confusion of tongues, during the earlier days of the human race. (Read Gen. 11: 4-8.) When people are united in any sinful purpose and practice, the result will almost inevitably be growth in evil; but when the Lord brings about divisions among them, their sinful purposes, plans, and actions will be greatly weakened, if not entirely destroyed. (Cf. 1 John 2: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 19.) If the Israelites, in their sinful purpose and practices, had been permitted to remain united and prosperous, the result would have been the abandonment of the nation, with all of its wealth and power, to idolatry; for in union there is strength, even though it be strength for evil. Therefore, as Isaac Errett points out, when the continued union of the twelve tribes would necessarily result in the surrender of the kingdom to the pollutions and iniquities of idol-worship, thereby subverting the very purpose for which the several tribes were chosen to be God's peculiar people, division became preferable to union; because the strength which would have come from such union would be strength for evil. This, then, was the Lord's reason for the division; but, as we shall see in this lesson, the human reason for the revolt was motivated from another cause.

## The Golden Text

*"Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."* Bible students are not all agreed as to the exact meaning and purpose of the passage, which serves as the golden text for today's lesson; and while it is always proper and right to try to understand any given passage of scripture in the light of the

author's evident intent, it appears that no violence will be done the statement, if it is used to show the effects of righteousness and sin in the lives of any and all people, both as individuals and as nations. Many of the proverbs, in the book from which the golden text is taken, were concerned with the relation of



a king and the people over whom he ruled. Government has always been necessary to maintain order; but that does not mean that God is always pleased with the governments of men. It is true that he ordained them, that is, he decreed that they should exist; but the nature of the government is largely left up to the people, or at least, to those in power.

A nation which is exalted is one which has been raised in the estimation of God and right thinking people; and the only way for that to be done, is for the people of the nation, and especially the leaders, to practice that which is right. Sin, on the other hand, will have a degrading effect on all people, both individually and as a nation. Solomon notes that "by the blessing of the upright the city is exalted; but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." (Prov. 11: 11.) A classic example of this may be seen in the cases of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 18: 22-33.) There is no indication that the words of the golden

text have any reference to ultimate salvation of the exalted nations; but rather to their moral position, as it respects other peoples of the earth. God never frowns upon any people who do right, even in this world and with reference to worldly affairs; but strict obedience to his will is, and always has been, essential to salvation with him in the glory world.

The annals of history furnish no example of any nation's being righteous before God, in the sense that it was wholly acceptable to him; but inasmuch as Christians are recognized by "the powers that be" as citizens, and since they are to have a leavening influence on society in general, it seems that the Lord's people should do everything within their power to get the governments to recognize and obey the will of God. But even while doing this, they must always keep the fact in mind that they are, above everything else, subjects of Christ their King. (See Phil. 3: 20, cf. 1 Pet. 2:11, 12.)

## The Text Explained

### Israel's Rebellion Against the House of David

(1 Kings 12: 16-19)

*And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the men subject to task-work; and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.*

All of chapter 11, and the preceding part of chapter 12, should be read before beginning the study of the lesson text now before us. And when that is done, it will be seen that Jehovah revealed to Jeroboam, a servant of the king, that is, king Solomon, through a prophet, that ten of the tribes of Israel would be

taken away from the house of David, and would be placed under Jeroboam as their king. And Jehovah promised Jeroboam that he would firmly establish the latter's kingdom, if he would be faithful to his trust. It appears that word that Jeroboam would become king reached Solomon; for the record says, "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; but Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon." (1 Kings 11: 40.)

After the death of Solomon, but before the formal crowning of Rehoboam, his son and successor, the people of Israel sent to Egypt, and called Jeroboam back to the homeland; and he went with his fellow countrymen to Shechem for the crowning ceremonies of Rehoboam. But it should be noted that when they assembled in Shechem, Jeroboam did not appear as a rival or enemy of Rehoboam; but as the spokesman for the oppressed people. And looking at the matter from the human point of view, that appears to have been the reason for calling Jeroboam out of Egypt; for the rec-

ord says that Jeroboam and the people of Israel came to Shechem, and that they spoke unto Rehoboam, saying, "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." (Read 1 Kings 12: 1-5.)

The statement of Jeroboam and the people was, of course, a flat demand for a clear statement of policy, on the part of the new king. They were tired of the heavy taxes, and the tyrannical treatment, which Solomon had imposed upon them; and they wanted to know what to expect from Rehoboam, before pledging their loyalty to him. The new king asked for time to formulate an answer, which at first sight appeared to be wise on his part; but it is easy to see from the way he acted when the people returned to him, that he was a very foolish young man. He consulted first with the men who had been associated with his father, or the older men of the kingdom, and they gave him some very wholesome advice; but he decided to confer with the younger men, the ones who had grown up with him, and as one would naturally expect, he followed, or rather said that he would follow, the counsel of his contemporaries, that is, the advice of the young men who had grown up with him. This is a striking example of the manner in which many a young man misses his opportunity for successful service.

The narrative now before us also presents a wonderful illustration of the manner in which the providence of God works. The *divine* reason for the division of the kingdom was pointed out earlier in this study; and now we come to the *human* reason, or that which appeared to be the human reason. God generally allows people to act as they want to; and he then makes all things work together for the accomplishment of his own will. Providence may be defined as an effect which is produced by a special act of God through the use of natural means, or, as in the case now before us, human instrumentality. God said that he would rend the kingdom away from the house of David, or, literally, from the son of Solomon; but he used natural means, that is,

the will and action of the people, to accomplish it. The harsh attitude which Rehoboam manifested was the immediate cause of the rupture; and that, in turn, set in motion the actions which followed.

The reaction of the people toward Rehoboam's attitude was both immediate and decisive; and it was doubtless contrary to what the king expected. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that he would have deliberately driven the people away from him; and if he had expected that which happened, he most certainly would have given them a different answer. The people did exactly that which God, through the prophet, said that they would do; but there is no indication that they intentionally planned to obey God. They acted with perfect human freedom; but in doing so they accomplished God's will with reference to the kingdom.

Paul and other New Testament writers frequently referred to the principle of how people can accomplish God's will, without intending to do so. For example, "For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him." (Acts 13: 27.) "And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled." (Acts 3: 17, 18.) "We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2: 6-8.) People therefore, by their own deliberate action, are daily accomplishing the will of God; but what happens to them in the day of judgment, will depend upon their character and the motive behind their deeds. This lesson cannot be too greatly emphasized. (Read carefully Isa. 10: 5-11.)

King Rehoboam made another foolish move, when he sent Adoram, evidently for the purpose of compelling obedience on the part of the people; but they were not long in making a believer out of the king. The record says that he made speed to get himself up to his chariot, and to flee to Jerusalem. After he reached the capital city, he assembled a large army to force the rebellious people back into his kingdom; but Jehovah interposed with a prophetic prohibition: "and they hearkened unto the word of Jehovah, and returned and went their way, according to the word of Jehovah." (See 1 Kings 12: 21-24)

### Jeroboam and His New Kingdom

(1 Kings 12: 20)

*And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.*

It is well, throughout this study, to keep in mind the fact that there is no indication that the people of Israel acted with any desire to please God, when they chose Jeroboam to be their king, notwithstanding the fact that Jehovah had spoken to Jeroboam, through the prophet Ahijah, regarding the matter. The whole context shows that Jeroboam was at that very time contemplating the seizure of the kingdom, and that Jehovah was simply telling him that he would establish him as king, if he would walk humbly before him. (Cf. 2 Chron. 13: 1-12.)

It has been pointed out more than once in this lesson that Jehovah had determined to rend the kingdom from the king of Judah, that is, from the descendant of David, because of the sins of Solomon; and it has also been emphasized that all of this was done through providential intervention, by Jehovah through natural means. The Israelites did not rebel against Rehoboam, because Jehovah wanted them to; they acted according to their own desire. And furthermore, Jehovah did not select Jeroboam to be king over Israel; the people of Israel selected him, and Jehovah used him, and promised to bless him, until he himself

rebelled against God. Jehovah made it plain to Jeroboam, through Ahijah, just what he expected of him, and just what portion of the original united kingdom would be his; but he also clearly stated that a portion of the kingdom would remain under the dominion of the descendants of David.'

The ten tribes which rebelled against the house of David were all the people of Israel, except the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. The Levites were not reckoned among the twelve tribes which received the land grants. Some people have been caused to wonder about the statement "there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only," when it is a matter of record that Benjamin was always included in the kingdom of Judah. This may have been due to the comparative insignificance of the tribe of Benjamin. The capital of the united kingdom was Jerusalem; and inasmuch as it was on the border between Judah and Benjamin, the entire population of the two tribes may have come to be regarded as only one tribe, when reference was made to them.

But be that as it may, we know that the northern kingdom, also known as the kingdom of Israel, was made up of ten tribes; and that fact, of course, necessarily implies that there were two tribes in the southern kingdom, also known as the kingdom of Judah. 1 Kings 11: 32, 36 speaks of only one tribe in the kingdom which would remain with the house of David; and that gives further credence to the idea that Judah and Benjamin were looked upon as one tribe, or, perhaps, that the more or less insignificant tribe of Benjamin simply "chose" to remain loyal to Judah. (See 1 Kings 11: 31.) But whatever may be the correct explanation of this, we know that Benjamin was a part of the kingdom of Judah. (See again 1 Kings 12: 21-23; 2 Chron. 11: 12.)

### Jeroboam's Gross Disobedience

(1 Kings 12: 25-31)

*Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and, he went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the*

*house of David: if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin; for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people, that were not of the sons of Levi.*

We have already seen that Jeroboam came to the throne of Israel, because of the sins of others; but it was not long after that before he demonstrated that he could not be trusted to follow the will and the way of the Lord. There does not, in fact, appear to be any significant element of piety in his character, as may be seen by reading 1 Kings 11: 26-28. Jeroboam belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, one of the ten tribes which pulled away from the house of David; and the fact that Jeroboam rebelled against both Solomon and Rehoboam, very likely strongly commended him to the powerful tribe of Ephraim. This was especially true, when it became evident that a majority of the tribes would secede from the original kingdom, that is, the united kingdom over which Saul, David and Solomon ruled. Any such move on the part of the dissatisfied tribes would prove disastrous to them, unless they had a competent and determined leader.

All the facts which we have regarding Jeroboam indicate that he possessed remarkable political sagacity, and was endowed with the energy which was essential to the carrying out of any plans which

were necessary to success. And in addition to his natural endowments, he was assured by the prophet of the Lord that he would be eminently successful as the ruler of Israel, if he would follow carefully the word of Jehovah. It apparently was not very long after Ahijah spoke to Jeroboam, before the latter was elevated to the throne of Israel; and he knew full well that God's hand was in that which was happening to him.

But one does not have to wait very long, after he begins to read the history of the reign of Jeroboam, before he can clearly see that the new monarch had no intention of following the will of the Lord. However, we should not conclude from this that the course of Jeroboam was unique: he was not the first man who was given a responsible place in the affairs of God and men, and indeed he was not the last, to forget the Lord who blessed him. In the words of Isaac Errett, "it is alike surprising and humiliating to learn, in our own experiences, the baseness and ingratitude of the human heart in forgetting God, and the insane self-reliance which so readily and recklessly substitutes human policy for divine counsel."

If one will read the closing paragraph of 1 Kings 12, in full, he will see the basic changes which Jeroboam made in God's order. He changed the object of worship—golden calves for God; he changed the place of worship—Bethel and Dan for Jerusalem; he changed the time of worship—the eighth month for the seventh; he changed the priesthood—those of any tribe for Levi; he changed the house of worship—houses of high places for God's house. But history, we are told has a way of repeating itself; and we are not surprised therefore to see the Roman Catholic Church come into existence, followed by Protestant Denominationalism, which, incidentally, perpetuates every major change which was made in producing the papal hierarchy.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What has been the general trend of

human experience with reference to the Lord's will?

What are some of the most noticeable examples of this in our day?

What was God's over-all purpose for his people during the Mosaic dispensation?

What appears to have been the principle according to which the kingdom of Israel was divided?

#### The Golden Text

In what sense is a nation exalted by righteousness?

How is such a situation brought about?

What, then, is the principal responsibility of the Lord's people today in this respect?

Upon what principle does Jehovah propose to save the peoples of the world?

#### Israel's Rebellion against the House of David

Why is it important to read the general setting of this lesson at this time?

What was the principal reason for God's giving most of the kingdom to another house?

Why was a small part of it continued under the kingship of David's descendants?

Discuss the process by which the kingdom was actually divided.

How does all of this illustrate the manner of the working of divine providence?

What is the specific meaning of the term "providence"?

How do people of any age frequently accomplish God's will without meaning to?

What effect should the ideas just indicated have on our thinking today?

In what ways did Rehoboam demonstrate his lack of wisdom?

#### Jeroboam and His Kingdom

Why was Jeroboam selected to govern the new kingdom?

Why was it essential to have a new king?

Tell something of the general character of Jeroboam.

What information did Jehovah give to him regarding his new place in Israel's history?

Why did the ten tribes rebel against Rehoboam?

How many tribes were in the kingdom of Judah? Give reasons for your answer.

#### Jeroboam's Gross Disobedience

What was the principal reason for Jeroboam's coming to the throne of Israel?

What was one of the very first things which he demonstrated after receiving his crown?

What widespread example does his action represent?

Why are so many people so thoughtless and wicked in this respect?

Why do people want to substitute their way for God's way?

What were some of the basic changes in God's order which Jeroboam made?

Why was it sinful for him to make these changes?

What has always been the common practice of the human race in this respect?

What are some of the most outstanding changes which have been made since the time of Christ?

Why do people, in the light of history and experience, continue to make changes in God's order?

## Lesson II—January 11, 1970

### EVIL RULERS IN ISRAEL

#### Lesson Text

#### 1 Kings 16: 23-34

23 In the thirty and first year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah began Om'-ri to reign over Is'-ra-el, *and reigned* twelve years: six years reigned he in Tir'-zah.

24 And he bought the hill Sa-ma'-ri-a of She'-mer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of She'-mer, the owner of the hill, Sa-ma'-ri-a.

25 And Om'-ri did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him.

26 For he walked in all the way of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, and in his sins wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin, to provoke Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, to anger with their vanities.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Om'-ri which he did, and his might that he

showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Is'-ra-el?

28 So Om'-ri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Sa-ma'-ri-a; and A'-hab his son reigned in his stead.

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of A'-sa king of Ju'-dah began A'-hab the son of Om'-ri to reign over Is'-ra-el: and A'-hab the son of Om'-ri reigned over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a twenty and two years.

30 And A'-hab the son of Om'-ri did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, that he took to wife Jeza-bel the daughter of Eth'-ba-al king of the Si-do'-ni-ans, and went and served Ba'-al, and worshipped him.

32 And he reared up an altar for Ba'al in the house of Ba'al, which he had built in Sa-ma'-ri-a.

33 And A'-hab made the A-she'-rah; and A'-hab did yet more to provoke Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, to anger than all the kings of Is'-ra-el that were before him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The years of the wicked shall be shortened.” (Prov. 10: 27.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 15: 25-28.

### Daily Bible Readings

January	5. M.....	Evil Conduct Rebuked (1 Kings 13: 1-10)
January	6. T.....	Condemnation of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14: 1-11)
January	7. W.....	Reason for Bondage (2 Kings 17: 24-41)
January	8. T.....	Wise Man's Warning (Prov. 1: 20-26)
January	9. F.....	Jeroboam's Evil Influence (2 Kings 13: 15-20)
January	10. S.....	Lesson for Us Today (1 Cor. 10: 1-10)
January	11. S.....	Beauty and Blessing of Unity (Psalm 133)

TIME.—Probably 886-852 B.C.

PLACES.—Tirzah and Samaria.

PERSONS.—Omri and Ahab.

### Introduction

The rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah continued together for approximately two hundred and fifty years, and they were engaged, during that time, in almost continuous warfare with each other. Israel was larger than Judah, both in number of tribes, and in land area. Both kingdoms taken together were not very large, so far as land area was concerned, being just about the combined size of Maryland and Rhode Island. Israel alone was about the size of New Hampshire; while Judah was approximately half the size of New Jersey. The kingdom of Judah continued to exist, after the fall of Israel, for about one hundred and thirty-five years. Israel fell to the Assyrians, while Judah was a victim of the Babylonians, the empire which wrested world dominion from the Assyrians, with the help of the Indo-European peoples to the east of Elam.

Both Israel and Judah had nineteen kings each. Judah had one queen, who was a usurper; but she was not recognized as being a legitimate ruler of the house of David, his queen was the daughter of Ahab, one of the kings of Israel. All the kings of Judah, beginning with Rehoboam, were of the house and lineage of David; but when we turn to the kingdom of Israel, the

34 In his days did Hi'-el the Beth'-el-ite build Jer'-i-cho: he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of A-bi'-ram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Se'-gub, according to the word of Je-ho'-vah, which he spake by Josh'-u-a the son of Nun.

situation is quite different. The nineteen kings of Israel belonged to nine different dynasties. The southern kingdom (Judah) always had the same capital, while Israel had three different capitals, namely, (1) Schechem, (2) Tirzah, and (3) Samaria. And in addition to being about three times as large as Judah, the northern kingdom (Israel) had practically all of the economic advantages. They were better situated for trade with other countries, and their land, being more fertile, was better suited for live stock and agriculture. But there was another respect in which Judah was stronger: they had the city of Jerusalem, which was the capital of the united kingdom, and which continued as the capital of Judah, along with its magnificent buildings and glorious traditions. The temple, along with the Levitical priesthood, gave Judah a decided advantage religiously. This, as we saw earlier, was recognized by Jeroboam, and led to his setting up a new and sinful religious practice for the northern kingdom.

The two Books of Kings, and those of Chronicles, are chiefly concerned with the history of the two rival kingdoms; and since most of the prophets, whose writings we have, lived during the period of the

divided kingdom, and that of Judah after the fall of Israel, we have much information regarding the two realms in the record of these spokesmen for God, which have been preserved in the Scriptures. When we read about the kings of Judah, we learn that some of them were good, some were bad, and some vacillated between the right

and the wrong. But when we consider the kings of Israel, we soon learn that they all had one thing in common, namely, they did that which was evil in the eyes of Jehovah. There was not a single good king among them; they were all bad, but some were decidedly worse than the others, as we shall see later on in these studies.

### The Golden Text

*"The years of the wicked shall be shortened."* The statement just quoted is the closing part of one of Solomon's proverbs: "The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." A proverb, such as Solomon coined or spoke, may be defined as "sentences of ethical wisdom"; or, which is practically the same thing, *brief terse sentences of popular sagacity*. The Bible tells us that Solomon spoke "three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five." (1 Kings 4: 32.) The proverb from which the golden text is taken may be described as one of contrast, inasmuch as the fate of the wicked is set over against the blessing of the righteous.

The style of the Hebrew writers of the Old Testament is frequently characterized by the use of a device, which is known as "parallelism." The usual manner in which the two parts of the parallelism were connected was either by "and" or "but." If "and" was used, then the second part of the parallelism would repeat, in slightly different words, that which was affirmed in the first part. The repetition could take the form of an elaboration, and explanation, or a definition. However, if the two parts of the parallelism were joined by "but," a contrast was indicated. The "parallel effect" is clearly indicated in some of the better translations of the Scriptures, as

for example, the American Standard Version, the version from which the lesson texts of the Annual are taken.

The golden text for today's lesson, as already pointed out, is the second arm of the parallel statement from which it is taken. "The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days"; *but* "the years of the wicked shall be shortened." The "parallel" now before us is based on the well known principle of rewards and punishment, which promises a long, happy, and prosperous life for those who fear the Lord; and a short life, cut off by calamity for the wicked. This is not to say that this is literally true in every individual instance; but this is the general rule, and is so recognized throughout the Scriptures.

For,  
He that would love life,  
And see good days,  
Let him refrain his tongue from  
evil,  
And his lips that they speak no  
guile:  
And let him turn away from evil,  
and do good;  
Let him seek peace and pursue it.  
For the eyes of the Lord are upon  
the righteous,  
And his ears unto their supplica-  
tion:  
But the face of the Lord is upon  
them that do evil.

(1 Pet. 3: 10-12; cf. Eph. 6: 1-3;  
Eccles. 8: 11-14.)

### The Text Explained

#### A New King, a New Dynasty, and a Continuation of Sin

(1 Kings 16: 23-28)

*In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, and reigned twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. And he bought the hill of Samaria of Shemer for two talents of*

*silver; and he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria. And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his*

*sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.*

The manner in which Omri came to the throne of Israel is set forth in the two paragraphs, which immediately precede this section of the lesson text. "In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also smitten the king; wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?"

"Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri. But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned." (1 Kings 16: 15-22.)

Although it had been less than fifty years since the northern kingdom of Israel had been established, it is a remarkable fact that beginning with Omri Israel witnessed her fourth distinct dynasty! Jehovah promised Jeroboam that the kingdom would remain in his house, if he would be faithful unto him. "And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy

soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in mine eyes, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and will build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee." (1 Kings 11: 37, 38.)

As one looks back over the history of the kings of Israel, and especially during the time of the reign of Jeroboam, one wonders why they put such little trust in the promises of Jehovah. But there was no promise made to Jeroboam which was more direct and applicable, than the promises which God has made to his people through Christ. "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matt. 6: 25-34; cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 19.)

Although Zimri removed himself from any claim to the throne of Is-



rael, the way was not clear for Omri to become the ruler of that nation, following his election by the military forces; for not all the people sided with him, as we have already seen. The seven-day reign of Zimri can hardly be considered a dynasty, in the popular sense of the term, yet he did not belong to the dynasty before him, nor to the one which followed him; and if he is to be considered a king ("Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah," 1 Kings 16: 15), he must also be considered as the head of a separate dynasty. The context, which has already been quoted, indicates that the civil struggle between the forces of Omri, and those of Tibni, continued for approximately four years. (Cf. 1 Kings 16: 15, 23.) Omri appears to have been the "strong man," as that expression is generally understood, with the army behind him; and that probably accounts for his ultimate victory. All of this reminds us of present-day struggles for political power, which we hear about in many parts of the world.

There were four kings in the dynasty which was founded by Omri, and it was surpassed in number only by the succeeding dynasty of Jehu, which had five successive rulers. The most widely known king of the Omri dynasty, was his son and successor, Ahab, notwithstanding the fact that Omri himself seems to have been his son's equal in sagacity, ability, and accomplishment. Omri's decision to remove the capital of his kingdom from Tirzah to Samaria, is generally regarded as a very wise move on his part; and it may have been prompted by the fire which destroyed the castle of the king's house in Tirzah, and took the life of his predecessor on the throne. It also appears that Omri put an end to the bloody wars, which had plagued Israel and Judah for a half century; thus allowing his country to enter upon an era of great prosperity.

Isaac Errett, in commenting on the character of Omri, says, "While Omri was prudent and skillful in promoting the peace and material prosperity of his kingdom, he was reckless as to the religious character of the people and the high religious mission of the nation. With him, heathenism was as good as the reli-

gion taught by Jehovah, if only it would advance the prosperity and security of his kingdom. He looked upon religion with the eye of a politician, valuing it according to its power to serve the royal welfare. His alliance with Tyre opened the way for the return of the corrupt and licentious worship of Astarte, and even the calf-worship at Bethel and Dan, established by Jeroboam, seems no longer to have been favored at court. That worship was the worship of Jehovah under sacred symbols; but now the worship of Jehovah was to be entirely supplanted by the worship of Baal."

The attitude toward worship, and especially as it related to the worship of Jehovah, which was continued and expanded by Ahab, no doubt accounted for the statement. "And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him." It appears that up to the time of Omri, the people *pretended* to worship Jehovah symbolically; but with the inauguration of the new regime, even the simulated worship of the true God was replaced by devotion to Baal. This influence was felt for years to come, as may be seen by considering the testimony of prophets who spoke after Omri's day, as for example, "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab." (Mic. 6: 16; cf. Amos 2: 6-8.) Omri was apparently the first king of Israel to be buried in Samaria. He reigned twelve years, and laid the foundation for the Phoenicia-Israel brotherhood which, in the view of some Bible students, may be referred to in Amos 1: 9. This, however, is not certain.

#### A Son Who Exceeded His Father in Wickedness

(1 Kings 16: 29-33)

*And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife*

*Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*

Ahab was one of the most outstanding kings of Israel, but it is easy to see that his record as the ruler of the northern kingdom is infamous, rather than famous. However, if we look at Ahab purely from the standpoint of the world, it will have to be admitted that he achieved great success. In the words of the inspired historian, "Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kings 22: 39.) Hastings points out that if we look at the reign of Ahab from the political point of view, it is easy to see that he stands out very prominently among kings. There were few who were greater, more successful, and grander than he. The kingdom of Israel was surrounded by enemies when Ahab came to the throne; but when he left it, the dominion was enjoying a state of considerable prosperity.

Ahab was a conqueror, as well as a builder; and in his national life he was magnificent, his ivory house being one of the wonders of the world. And so, according to the judgment of men, Ahab was a great man, a wise king, and a hero whose memory would not soon perish. However, we should all remember that it is morality, rather than worldly accomplishments, which counts in the rightful appraisal of one's character. And when we look at Ahab's life, rather than his achievements, the situation is entirely different. He was brought up without God, and lived in open rebellion against him all the days of his life. And when one takes into consideration the influence of Elijah around him, he will have to conclude that Ahab knew what he should do; but the divine record says that "there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that

which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel." (1 Kings 21: 25, 26.)

The fate of Ahab, in the words of *Smith's History of the Bible*, was decided when he married Jezebel. When he took her to be his wife, he was probably thinking primarily of his Sidonian alliance, and the strength which it would give him against his Syrian foes; but instead of its workings as he thought it would, Jezebel made Ahab the participator of crimes which drew down on his house the curse of extermination, and poisoned what could have been his happiness during his remaining time here upon the earth. Thus the very means which he sought to use to secure the glory of his kingdom, and the permanence of his dynasty, proved to be the ruin of both. (Cf. 2 Kings 9: 7-10.) In spite of his courage and genius, Ahab was preeminently a weak man, vacillating between his fear of Elijah the prophet, and the all but complete domination of his strong-willed wife. And so, in the words of Philip S. Worsley,

Oft as I act, or think, or speak,  
 Comes battle of two Wills within,  
 This like an infant poor and weak,  
 That like a Demon strong for sin.

This labours, flutteringly alive,  
 As if a cold spark went and came  
 That other doth against it drive  
 Red torrents of devouring flame.

### **The Inevitable Fulfillment of an Ancient Curse**

(1 Kings 16: 34)

*In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.*

The fall of the city of Jericho took place more than five hundred years before the time of our lesson for today, as may be seen by reading the sixth chapter of Joshua; and it was at that time that Jehovah pronounced the curse, through Joshua,

upon any one who might rise up to rebuild the city. The inspired words were, "And Joshua charged them with an oath at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before Jehovah, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: with the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." (Josh. 6: 26.) The text is not clear as to whether or not all the children in between died. It could mean that they all died; and again, it is possible that the writer only meant to say that the oldest and youngest would die. This point is not important to an understanding of the lesson involved in the incident.

That which is said regarding the

Lord's curse regarding the man who should rebuild the city, is but another illustration of the certainty of God's predictions—regardless of the length of time which may elapse between a given prediction and its fulfillment. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8.) We are not told whether or not Hiel knew of the curse which had been pronounced through Joshua; but inasmuch as apostasy was so widespread during the time of Ahab, it is possible that if Hiel did know about it, he did not have any regard for either Jehovah or his word. But we should learn from this, as well as from the general teaching of the Bible that the word of God will never fail; and we should therefore act accordingly. (Cf. Isa. 55: 10, 11; Matt. 24: 35; John 12: 48-50.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is known regarding the length of the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah?  
How many kings did each have and what important contrast is seen between the two groups?  
What special advantages did each kingdom enjoy?  
What place and work did the Old Testament prophets have during those times?  
Discuss the work of those prophets.

### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?  
What is the meaning of a "proverb"?  
What peculiar style did many of the Old Testament writers employ and what can you say of its effectiveness?

### A New King, a New Dynasty, and a Continuation of Sin

Under what conditions did Omri reach the throne of Israel?  
What is known regarding the dynasty which he founded?  
Why did the kings of Israel put such little trust in the promises of Jehovah?  
What important lesson is there in this situation for us?  
Why is it so difficult for many present-day Christians to trust in the Lord?  
Why, apparently, was Omri successful in his fight for the throne of Israel?  
What do the Scriptures reveal regarding the character of Omri?

What was the predominant policy regarding worship during the reign of Omri?

### A Son Who Exceeded His Father in Wickedness

What is known regarding the ability of Ahab as a ruler in Israel?  
What were the principal factors which contributed to his success as a king?  
What are some of the principal things for which Ahab is noted?  
What is the proper standard for judging one's character? Why is this true?  
Looking at this king from the moral point of view, what can you say of him?  
Why was he so reckless in his attitude toward Jehovah?  
What two potent influences were at work in his life?  
Why would Ahab want to marry Jezebel?  
What over-all effect did she have on his life and character?  
Why would such a king listen to his wife rather than to Almighty God?  
In what way is this principle repeated in our day?

### The Inevitable Fulfillment of an Ancient Curse

What was the curse and when was it spoken?  
About how long was it between the time it was spoken and its fulfillment?  
How could any one know that the curse was being fulfilled?  
What important lesson is there in this incident for us?  
Why would any man want to attempt to rebuild Jericho?  
How should all people regard the Word of the Lord?

## Lesson III—January 18, 1970

## ELIJAH, A COURAGEOUS PROPHET

## Lesson Text

## 1 Kings 18: 25-39

25 And E-li'-jah said unto the prophets of Ba'-al, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Ba'-al from morning even until noon, saying, O Ba'-al, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that E-li'-jah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And E-li'-jah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Je-ho'-vah that was thrown down.

31 And E-li'-jah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Je-ho'-vah came, saying, Is'-ra-el shall be thy name.

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Je-ho'-vah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that E-li'-jah the prophet came near, and said, O Je-ho'-vah, the God of Abraham, of I'-ssac, and of Is'-ra-el, let it be known this day that thou art God in Is'-ra-el, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O Je-ho'-vah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Je-ho'-vah, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of Je-ho'-vah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Je-ho'-vah, he is God; Je-ho'-vah, he is God.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"How long go ye limping between the two sides?"* (1 Kings 18: 21.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 18: 1-24.

## Daily Bible Readings

January 12. M.....	Elijah, A New Leader (1 Kings 17: 1-6)
January 13. T.....	Elijah Is Provided for (1 Kings 19: 1-8)
January 14. W.....	Elijah, "The Troubler of Israel" (1 Kings 18: 17-24)
January 15. T.....	Elijah at Zarephath (1 Kings 17: 8-18)
January 16. F.....	Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18: 30-39)
January 17. S.....	The Still Small Voice (1 Kings 19: 9-16)
January 18. S.....	Elijah Is Translated (2 Kings 2: 1-11)

TIME.—Probably about 910 B.C.

PLACE.—Mount Carmel, in northwest Samaria.

PERSONS.—Elijah, the people of Israel, and the prophets of Baal.

## Introduction

The prophet Elijah, known as *Elijah the Tishbite*, has been referred to as "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced." Something of the stature to which he attained, and the importance of his ministry, may be gauged by the fact that his name appears in the New Testament more than that of any other prophet of the Old Testament. The names of men like Moses and David are found in the New Testament more than that of Elijah; but they were more than prophets. And too, the fact that he was the only prophet of the old order who was chosen to appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, speaks volumes for his life and character. His prophetic ministry as God's spokesman to his rebellious people may be likened to a shining meteor, as he flashed across the dark slues of one of Israel's darkest nights.

It is doubtful if any prophet of God ever began his work with the suddenness which characterized the ministry of Elijah. His appearance in Israel was as startling as that of John the Baptist, when that harbinger of the Lord began to preach repentance in the wilderness of Judaea. The only thing which we know of the origin of Elijah, is that which is expressed in the following statement, namely, "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (1 Kings 17:

1.) After that startling announcement, Jehovah told Elijah to leave there at once, and to hide himself by the brook Cherith, which was before the Jordan. Elijah, as his custom was, promptly obeyed the voice of Jehovah; and he apparently remained in the designated place, until the brook of Cherith dried up. But while he was hiding there, he was told to drink of the water of the brook, and that the ravens would bring him food to eat. (Read 1 Kings 17: 2-7.)

The throne of Israel was occupied by one of the most wicked men who ever sat in that high place of authority; but he was the weak and willing tool of his unscrupulous

wife, Jezebel, the former Sidonian princess, whom he brought to the throne, and who has been referred to as the Lady Macbeth of Jewish history. Idolatry had, indeed, been among the Lord's people since the day he called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees; but it apparently had reached a new low, following the coming of Jezebel to the kingdom of Israel. She was a devotee of Baal and she was determined to make her religion supreme in Israel. This meant that the religion of Jehovah would have to go; and it appears that for the first time in history, religious persecution became a means to an end. The altars which had been erected to the worship of Jehovah were thrown down; his prophets were mercilessly slain with the sword or forced into hiding; and it looked as if nothing could stop the wave of moral corruption, which swept over the land.

But the religious crisis was not altogether without its good side; for it produced its hero, and Elijah, inspired and sustained by God, met the whole ungodly situation head-on. It did, indeed, look as if Israel's zero hour had arrived, and that, looking at the matter from the human point of view, it appeared that conditions could hardly have been worse; but, as some one has noted, "when wickedness develops into extraordinary proportions, God meets it with extraordinary measures." Rugged, stern, solitary, and with no commission to reveal new truth, Elijah became the great reformer, and the restorer of God's order. He wrote, predicted, and taught almost nothing, so far as the record goes; and that has led some one to observe that his worth to Israel was not so much in what he said, as in that which he did; not because he created, but rather because he destroyed. His task was to reform and to restore, rather than to advance; and his endowments of "spirit and power" corresponded to his work. It appears that his only clothing was the "mantle" or cloak (1 Kings 19: 19), which descended upon Elisha, and which passed into and has continued as a proverb, and the leathern girdle which was worn around his loins, and which held his

garment in place. (See 2 Kings 1: 8.) Thus clothed, and divinely protected from the wrath of Jezebel's persecutions in the solitudes of the

Trans-Jordanic Cherith, Elijah was fully prepared by Jehovah for his mission to the apostate king and the rebellious people of Israel.

### The Golden Text

*"How long go ye limping between the two sides?"* The force of Elijah's question, as expressed in the language just quoted, can best be understood in the light of its context. Ahab had met with Elijah, and had accused him of troubling Israel; but Elijah replied, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim." The prophet then requested the king to gather all Israel together to him upon mount Carmel, and all the false prophets who did Jezebel's biddings. (See 1 Kings 18: 16-19.)

"So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay in on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah: and the

God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." (1 Kings 18: 20-24.)

No thoughtful person can fail to see that the principle of the lesson now before us is imminently relevant for our day; for life itself is an unending series of issues which must be met in one way or another. No responsible person can escape the necessity of choosing between the alternatives which are placed before him. A failure to make a positive choice, is to be guilty of indecision; and that, in turn, will hamper one's capacity to decide anything as he should, and will leave him perpetually on the fence. It is true, to be sure, that decisions between alternatives are often very difficult, since most of these choices involve the "either/or" element; with the result that if we do this, we cannot do that. The story is told of a sign along a roadway which read, "Pick your ruts carefully, you'll be in it for the next five miles." And since our choices involve so much of the *either/or* alternatives, we frequently find ourselves seeking to avoid making them. We endeavor to try to make ourselves feel that if we wait long enough, we can avoid the necessity of making a choice; but the truth is, If we wait long enough the events of life will make the decisions for us. (Cf, Matt. 12: 30; Josh. 24: 15; Deut. 30: 15-20.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Efforts and Failure of the Prophets of Baal

(1 Kings 18: 25-29)

*And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And*

*they leaped about the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening oblation; but*

*there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*

The mountain on which this remarkable event in history took place, was between the plain of Esdraelon and the Mediterranean sea, and it has been described as the finest and most beautiful mountain in all Palestine. It was indeed an ideal place for this great contest; and the scene which is pictured here is one of the most striking and memorable in the annals of history. The scene before us represents one of those great culminating moments, when life suddenly becomes dramatic; when, as it were, the confused people on the stage of action quickly shift themselves into position and place, and the curtain rises on the acts of a great tragedy. Not only do such culminations occur in national life; they also take place in the lives of individuals. And it is in such moments as these that the character of coming ages is determined, and the destiny of individuals is fixed.

It was here on this mountain in northwestern Samaria, that both the king and the people over whom he ruled heard proclaimed, probably for the first time, one of the most vital principles of true religion, namely, that there cannot be any compromise with the truth. It was here that the stern, but intensely obedient, prophet, as he spoke for God, brought them squarely to the issue, as we have already seen, with a single sentence, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him"; and the shot which he aimed at the people hit them squarely in the heart. It is true that the people did not immediately answer the prophet; but it is evident from that which followed that Baal was, for all practical purposes, defeated there and then. All that came after the proposed test, and the altar of Jehovah, "are but the successive steps of the victor pursuing his vanquished and demoralized foe."

There are many aspects of "Baal" referred to in the Bible, since he is pictured in various relationships; but it appears quite certain that the "Baal" which the people of our lesson served, was the original sun god, and as such he was the *god of fire*,

as Adam Clarke points out; and in the contest of the occasion, he had only to work in his own element. This is evidently why Elijah made his proposal. The worshippers of Baal believed that their god had peculiar power over fire; and since that was true, as they viewed the situation, the proposal which Elijah placed before them struck at the very heart of their religion. This was indeed a bold proposition, on the part of the lone prophet; and there is certainly no reason for thinking that he would have made it, had he not been authorized by Jehovah to do so. The people, however, knowing nothing of the Lord's direction in the matter, felt that the proposition which Elijah had made was eminently fair, candid, and honest.

William M. Taylor thinks that the prophets of Baal would rather have declined Elijah's proposal for the test, had they been able to come up with a feasible pretext for doing so; for they were wholly unprepared for an emergency like this. Their natural magic, their skill in sleight of hand performances, and their dexterity in deceit, were completely useless in such a predicament; but the prophet of God knew what he was doing. He had, in fact, by the help of God, counted on all this, and had committed the false prophets before the multitudes, so that they would have no kind of opportunity to deceive the people whom they had so often, and so long, duped; and would be wholly unable to offer any good reason whatsoever for asking for a delay.

Elijah knew, of course, that success would be on his side; and it was for this reason that he requested the prophets of Baal to make their sacrifice first. If the prophet of Jehovah had offered his sacrifice first, there would have been no trial of Baal; but, as it turned out to be, Elijah's purpose, was not only to demonstrate the power of Jehovah, but also to expose the utter weakness of Baal. It was therefore both natural and easy for the prophet of Jehovah to give preference to the "many"; and to appeal to their god by offering him the advantage of being first. And when once the offering was ready, the prophets of Baal spent the entire

morning in an effort to get their god to hear them.

The prayers and the leaping around the altar, on the part of the prophets of Baal, from morning until noon failed signally; and it was then that the prophet of Jehovah broke forth in a strain of biting sarcasm and withering irony. The scornful remarks which Elijah addressed to the prophets of Baal must have stung them severely, and probably caused them to think that their "tormentor" may have been telling the truth. Maybe their god was asleep, and would have to be awakened; and they therefore demonstrated their sense of desperation by cutting their flesh, until the blood gushed out upon their bodies. These frantic rites were continued, until the time of the offering of Israel's evening sacrifice, which was ordained by the law of Moses for the Lord's people. (Cf. Ex. 29: 39; Acts 3: 1; Luke 1: 8-11.)

### The People Behold the Process at Work

(1 Kings 18: 30-35)

*And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt-offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.*

It appears that the prophet Elijah was convinced that his aim had been, or was in the process of being, accomplished, when the humiliating failure of the prophets of Baal was seen by the people of Israel. His remaining work was to demonstrate

before the assembled multitude that Jehovah was in every way superior to Baal. There was one lesson which the prophet needed to enable his hearers to see, and that was that neither Jehovah nor Baal was a guest to be entertained, but rather a Deity to be worshipped and served; or, which is the same thing, a God to be implicitly obeyed. The man of God had already said to them, "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Jesus was later to say, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other." (Matt. 6: 24.) Elijah was not simply trying to get his people to turn their backs upon Baal; he wanted them to see and understand that they were the Lord's people, and were therefore obligated to follow him.

It is one thing to be a patron of religion, but quite something else to feel that one has been redeemed by the Lord, and is therefore his bond-servant. This is a lesson that people today, in practically every community, need to learn. The apostle Paul expresses the matter in this way, "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." (1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.) And Peter, speaking in the same vein, says, "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: 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: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Pet. 1: 17-21.)

The prophet Elijah's request for the people to come near to him, must have made a deep impression upon them. He wanted them to see



that the altar which Jezebel and her false prophets had been pushed down, would have to be rebuilt before an acceptable offering could be made to Jehovah. It is doubtful if there was a single altar which was built for the God of Israel, which could be found anywhere at that time; and it was necessary therefore that the prophet erect one. He did so, and was careful to let the people see that he was doing it the way which would honor God. And so, after the sacrifice was ready, Elijah took one other step which would result in showing the people the great power of Jehovah, namely, he had some of the people who were standing nearby to pour twelve jars of water upon the offering, which would make it clear to every one that there was no secret source of fire anywhere in the altar.

### Elijah's Prayer and Jehovah's Answer

(1 Kings 18: 36-39)

*And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turn their heart back again. Then the fire of Jehovah feel, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.*

The prayer of Elijah on the occasion now before us, is a shining example of a prayer for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, rather for one's own desires. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." (James 4: 3.) It should not be overlooked, that Elijah, before he prayed to Jehovah, called the people to him, and made certain that everything was done according to the law of the Lord; and then he requested Jehovah to hear him. It was apparently the prophet's aim to

let the people see, (1) that Jehovah alone was God in Israel; (2) that Elijah was his servant; (3) that all things which he had done were done at the word of Jehovah; and (4) that it was Jehovah himself who had turned the hearts of the people back again to him.

James also cites Elijah as an example of the supplication of a righteous man, whose prayer avails much in its working. "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James 5: 16-18.)

That which Jehovah did before the people of Israel, was precisely that which Elijah was expecting, with these results: (1) the worship of Baal was overthrown; and (2) the faith of Israel was restored. It should also be observed that the offenders had to be destroyed. (See verse 40.) The swift and terrible slaughter of the prophets of Baal, may be regarded as a solemn act of judgment. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.) The prophets of Baal were not only the administrators of a false and degrading religion; they were sinners against the theocracy of Jehovah. Although they had sinned grievously, Israel was still the kingdom of God; and he was still directing the affairs of that state. This, of course, means that the false prophets of Baal were judged as inciters of rebellion against a sovereign power, a crime for which the death penalty is written in the law of every civilized nation on earth today. (Cf. Rom. 13: 1-4; 1 Pet. 2: 13, 14.)

The practical benefit of this lesson for us today, is found in the fact that it furnishes a criterion for searching our own hearts. If we had been on mount Carmel when the events of this lesson transpired, on which side would we have stood? We can answer this question fairly, only by taking stock of our own conduct. The gods of those days have largely perished from the

earth; but there are others which claim our devotion, as for example, selfishness, material wealth, worldly pleasures, to name only a few. Do we really serve Jehovah, or do we pay honor to the gods of our day? We have seen how foolish Israel was; but are we doing any better? The same manner of making known one's allegiance is still available today. People are permitted (1) to

offer sacrifice; (2) the Lord even permits people to sacrifice to other gods first, as may be seen by reading Luke 15; 11-24; but (3) people will not be permitted to limp between the two sides indefinitely: they must make a decision. "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." (Matt. 12: 30.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What are the principal facts which are known regarding the prophet Elijah?

Under what circumstances did he begin his prophetic work?

Why had the people of Israel given themselves almost entirely to idolatry?

What great blessing grew out of their wickedness?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstance was the question of the golden text asked?

How did Elijah propose to settle the issue which was before him?

What vital lesson is there in all of this for us?

#### The Efforts and Failure of the Prophets of Baal

Where did the events of this lesson take place and what can you say regarding that location?

What does the scene which is pictured here represent in actual life?

What great proposition did the people hear proclaimed by the spokesman for God?

Who or what was the Baal who is set forth in this lesson?

Why did Elijah make the proposal which he made and what of its appropriateness?

How do we know that Jehovah directed Elijah in that which he said and did?

How did the prophets of Baal apparently feel about the contest which Elijah suggested?

Why didn't they reject it?

Why did Elijah want the prophets of Baal to make their offering first?

How did the prophet deal with the false teachers when their failure was apparent?

What was evidently Elijah's purpose in all of this?

In what way did the prophets of Baal respond to Elijah's ridicule?

#### The People Behold the Process at Work

How did Elijah apparently feel about his accomplishments in the contest at this point?

What important lesson did he want the people to see and understand?

What of the relevancy of this lesson to us?

Why did Elijah want the people to draw near to him after the prophets of Baal failed?

What preparation did Elijah make for his part of the contest?

Why did he want all the water on the sacrifice?

#### Elijah's Prayer and Jehovah's Answer

What was the nature of the prophet's prayer on this occasion?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding our own prayers?

What did Elijah want the people to see regarding his part of the contest?

What act of Elijah's devotion did James make use of in his epistle?

What actually happened following the prophet's prayer on mount Carmel?

What two major results were in evidence?

Why were the prophets of Baal destroyed?

What practical benefits do we receive from this study?

Lesson IV—January 25, 1970

ELIJAH AND NABOTH

Lesson Text

1 Kings 21: 1-7, 16-20

1 And it came to pass after these things, that Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite had a vineyard, which was in Jez'-re-el, hard by the palace of A'-hab king of Sa-ma'-ri-a.

2 And A'-hab spake unto Na'-both, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Na'-both said to A'-hab, Je-ho'-vah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And A'-hab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 But Jez'-e-bel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jez'-e-bel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Is'-ra-el? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite.

16 And it came to pass, when A'-hab heard that Na'-both was dead, that A'-hab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Na'-both the Jez'-re-el-ite, to take possession of it.

17 And the word of Je-ho'-vah came to E-li'-jah the Tish'-bite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet A'-hab king of Is'-ra-el, who dwelleth in Sa-ma'-ri-a: behold, he is in the vineyard of Na'-both, whither he is gone down to take possession of it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Na'-both shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And A'-hab said to E-li'-jah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness."* (Luke 12: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — 1 Kings 21: 8-15.

Daily Bible Readings

January 19. M.....	Ahab, A Covetous Man (1 Kings 21: 1-6)
January 20. T.....	Covetousness Leads to Murder (1 Kings 21: 5-14)
January 21. W. ....	Covetousness Leads to Condemnation (1 Kings 21: 17-26)
January 22. T.....	A Description of Covetousness (Amos 8: 4-10)
January 23. F.....	End of Covetousness (2 Kings 5: 20-27)
January 24. S.....	An Example of Covetousness (Josh. 7: 16-22)
January 25. S.....	A Wicked Woman Destroyed (2 Kings 9: 30-37)

TIME. — 899 B.C.

PLACE. — Jezreel.

PERSONS. — Naboth, Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah.

## Introduction

It goes without saying that Ahab, in many ways, was a man of unusual ability, and his reign as king, in the estimation of the world, places him among the most successful rulers of the northern kingdom. If he had known and respected God as he should have, the story of his life would have been entirely different. But one cannot excuse the king's misconduct on the grounds that he knew nothing of that which is right in God's sight; for his contact with the prophet Elijah, to say nothing of other influences for good which came into his life, was sufficient to bring to his attention many of the principles of righteousness; for the inspired record plainly says that he sold himself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah. (1 Kings 21: 25.) He simply allowed the wrong kind of influence to have sway in his life. Ahab could have done better, if he had wanted to; but when his record is examined in its fulness, it will be easy to see that he followed the way of his own choosing.

It often happens that a person will allow a particular sin to dominate his life, with the result that his final destiny will depend upon his attitude toward it. Benedict Arnold, for example permitted the spirit of resentment and revenge to characterize his thinking; and so, being ambitious and quick to take offense, it was easy for him to imagine that he was being mistreated. If Benedict Arnold had curbed that attitude, and had honestly sought to overcome it, his record would have been different; but when he allowed that feeling to have free rein, the time came when he went beyond the point of no return. Having been reprimanded by General Washington, he did not check his desire for revenge, before attempting to betray his country into the hands of the

enemy. And if one will read the gospel narratives, he will not have any difficulty in seeing that that was precisely the course which was followed by Judas Iscariot, in betraying Jesus. (1) He allowed avarice and the spirit of revenge to remain in his heart; (2) he was rebuked by Jesus; and (3) he sought an opportunity to deliver his Lord into the hands of his enemies. (Matt. 26: 6-16; Mark 14: 1-11; cf. Psalm 119: 11.)

Bacon notes that a man who studies revenge keeps his own wounds green, while Robert Burns pictures "our sulky, sullen dame," "Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm"

Ahab, as a willing tool of the evil one, allowed the spirit of covetousness, along with many other wicked traits, to be at home in his daily living; and it was for this reason that he could not accept "No" from any one whose possessions he wanted. He was simply not interested in the rights and wishes of others, but sought, first and foremost to have his own desires satisfied. In summing up some of the more noticeable characteristics of Ahab, *The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* points out that in spite of his courage and his genius, which made him a great king, Ahab was pre-eminent a weak man. Indeed the most prominent influence throughout his whole life is the working of a self-deceiving conscience. His sin is ever as a serpent that hides its head: it has some cloak or shelter, rather than being of that open and bold character which defies God; "heavy and displeased," he broods over sinful wishes; and is glad to reap fruits of that wickedness which he did not dare by himself to commit. (P. 339f.)

## The Golden Text

*"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness."* One of the great sins of our age, and apparently of all ages, as for that matter, is the sin of covetousness. The basic meaning of "covetousness" is the unlawful or inordinate desire for that which belongs to another. The

tenth commandment of the Decalogue, which was based on the fundamental and eternal principles of contentment and unselfishness, reads as follows: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant,

nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." (Ex. 20: 17.) So grave is the sin of covetousness, that Paul calls it the *wicked one* (1) renounce and despise Jehovah, or, which is the same thing, the covetous abhor Jehovah, a profound rejection of him. People who are not familiar with the nature and true meaning of covetousness, a serious fault; but if they will take into account that which the Bible teaches regarding the question, they will soon see that there is no other sin in the Old Testament to which the stigma employed by the psalmist is attached. There is no possible way for a covetous person to be pleasing to God; and neither is there a greater mark of infamy used to characterize any other sin. Even a blasphemer who denounces God in his rash moments, would not employ such terms against him in his sober moments. But for one to denounce and revile Jehovah, as the Bible says the covetous does, is to be guilty of the very acme of antagonism, or, which is the same thing, to have a mind which is the very opposite the mind of God. Is it any wonder therefore that Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6: 24.)

The psalmist says, "For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and the covetous renounceth, yea, contemneth Jehovah." (Psalm 10: 3.) The passage just quoted is an example of Hebrew "parallelism," a style of sentence structure in which the first part states a proposition, and which is repeated, in slightly different words, in the second part. If one will take this fact into consideration, it will not be difficult for him to see that some rather strong language is applied to the sin of covetousness. It is the "*wicked*" who boasts of his heart's desire, while the "*covetous*" (the covetous is in apposition with the wicked; or, which is the same thing,

the covetous is put alongside the wicked, as it were, to explain and Paul calls it the *wicked one*) renounce and despise Jehovah, or, which is the same thing, the covetous abhor Jehovah, a profound rejection of him.

People who are not familiar with the nature and true meaning of covetousness, a serious fault; but if they will take into account that which the Bible teaches regarding the question, they will soon see that there is no other sin in the Old Testament to which the stigma employed by the psalmist is attached. There is no possible way for a covetous person to be pleasing to God; and neither is there a greater mark of infamy used to characterize any other sin. Even a blasphemer who denounces God in his rash moments, would not employ such terms against him in his sober moments. But for one to denounce and revile Jehovah, as the Bible says the covetous does, is to be guilty of the very acme of antagonism, or, which is the same thing, to have a mind which is the very opposite the mind of God. Is it any wonder therefore that Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6: 24.)

## The Text Explained

### Ahab's Request and Naboth's Refusal

(1 Kings 21: 1-4)

*And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of*

*my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turn away his face, and would eat no bread.*

"These things" apparently refer to the events of the preceding chapter, although chapters 20 and 21 are transposed in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and in Josephus' account of the events of those days. That, however, is a question for the textual critics, and we shall simply regard the narrative now before us as being accurately set forth in our versions of the Scriptures. The "Jezreel" mentioned in the text we are now considering was a city or town, in which Ahab maintained a residence, probably a summer home, and which may have been the ivory palace which he built. (See 1 Kings 22: 39; cf. Amos 3: 15.) The prin-

capital capital of Ahab's kingdom was in Samaria. The vineyard which belonged to Naboth, the one we are now considering, was "hard by the palace of Ahab," and the king wanted it for an herb garden.

The proposition which Ahab presented to Naboth, regarding the latter's vineyard, appears on the surface to be fair and legitimate in every way. But we should always remember that things which are recorded in the Bible are not always necessarily "what they seem." People should be careful about drawing conclusions regarding the teaching of the Scriptures, before they consider all that the Bible says on the subject under consideration. (Cf. Isa. 55; 8, 9.) The vineyard which belonged to Naboth was not his to do as he pleased with it; it was the hereditary property of his family, that is, those who were then living and who would come in the future, so long as the law of Moses remained in force. This had been the way matters stood since the land was divided, and the law concerning it had been given. (See Lev. 25: 23-28; Num. 36: 5-9.) Later on the prophet Ezekiel would say, "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance, to thrust them out of their possession; . . . that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." (Ezek. 46: 18; cf. Mic. 2: 1, 2.)

Thus, when Naboth said, "Jehovah forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee," he was but showing that he feared God, and that it was his duty to obey God, rather than man. While we have no direct information on the subject, it is quite possible that Naboth was one of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. (Cf. 1 Kings 19: 18; Rom. 11: 1-4.) And while the record which we do have gives us some insight into the character of Naboth, the reaction of the king to his neighbor's refusal to give up the inheritance of his fathers, enables us to form a fairly clear idea as to the kind of man Ahab was. He reminds one of a spoiled child who, having been used to having his way in everything, and not knowing the meaning of refusal, lies down on the floor and refuses to eat, or even to look at any one, until he gets his

way. There is, however, this difference between the spoiled child and Ahab: the king apparently did not expect to get the vineyard of Naboth. But this was not the first time that this king had gone to his house "heavy and displeased." (Read 1 Kings 20: 35-43.) Ahab was basically a covetous man, and that trait had a profound effect on his overall character.

We have already seen in this study that a covetous man is totally unlike God, and inasmuch as that is true, we should make every effort to see to it that every trace of the malady is removed from our lives. It appears that many people do not take seriously anything which may affect their welfare, until they are brought face to face with its deadly effects. Let us consider again this issue: Why is covetousness so deadly, when it is permitted to influence the thinking and lives of people? It has already been pointed out that covetousness is the exact opposite of the spirit and nature of God. It is more extreme than atheism. Atheism only fails to see a Divine Being; covetousness sees his quite well, but does not admire his beauty, but, instead, longs for the exact opposite. God is love, and the essence of love is giving; covetousness is essence of selfishness is retaining. God is the converse of avarice; he dispenses his bounty to the needy, while avarice gathers gold for itself. God lavishes his treasures, while avarice hoards its gains. God does not live to himself, but avarice has no life for another. God seeks out the destitute, while avarice conceals himself, so that he will not meet the poor. God has many mansions for his people, but avarice covets and has but a single room—only enough for itself. God scatters sunbeams, while avarice picks up pins. God sheds his blood to give life for the needy, while avarice sheds the blood of the needy to give life to itself. Is there any wonder, therefore, that the psalmist selected as the reverse of godliness, avarice, rather than atheism?

"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,

And not to covetousness." (Psalm 119: 36.)

Those who know something about

the nature of the sin we are now dealing with, can well understand why Jesus says, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." (Luke 12: 15.)

el to the Rescue!

(1 Kings 21: 5-7)

*But Jezebel his wife came to him,*

*and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money: or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.*

The highhanded method by which

Jezebel made good her promise to give Naboth's vineyard to Ahab, is set forth in the inspired record. Beginning with verse 8, we read: "So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, and that dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death," (1 Kings 21: 8-10.)

The manner in which Jezebel or-

dered her plans to be carried out plainly shows that she understood the law of Moses regarding such matters. After notifying the leaders of the king's city, she ordered a fast to be proclaimed, as would be done in the case of grave national emergency, caused by a crime which involved all the people in danger of being punished by Jehovah, or when they especially felt the need of his help. (Cf. 2 Chron. 20: 1-4; Ezra 8: 21f.) The fast, thus proclaimed and observed, would prepare the way to Deity. The alleged culprit was then to be brought to trial, and at least

two witnesses had to testify to his guilt. (See Deut. 17: 2-7; 19: 15.)

The punishment for the sin of blasphemy, ~~which is consistent~~ (See Lev. 24: 16; cf. John 10: 31-33; Acts 7: 54-60.) The subservient leaders to whom Jezebel's letters were sent, apparently made no delay in carrying out her demands, as may be seen by reading 1 Kings 21: 11-15.

It is fair to assume from that which is said in the closing paragraph of the chapter from which today's lesson text is taken, that Ahab's conscience was not entirely gone. The sacred historian says, "And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but in his son's day will I bring the evil upon his house." (1 Kings 21: 27-29.) God does not want any one to be lost (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9), and he is always willing to show mercy, and give the sinner a further opportunity to turn to him, if and when the rebellious one shows any sign of penitence.

But when we look at Jezebel, it is not possible for us to see any sign of conscientiousness whatsoever. She apparently was completely without fear of either God or man; and she did not hesitate to do anything, regardless of what effect it might have on others, if only her own desires could be realized. It was pointed out in an earlier study that Jezebel was a heathen princess, the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians. After stating that Ahab did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, above all that were before him, the inspired historian added this comment, "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." (1 Kings 16: 31.)

Jezebel, as Hastings points out, has been the type of female wickedness throughout the ages; but she is especially the type of wickedness

which irrevocably ruins the morally weak, while they are hesitating on the brink of sin, gives the fatal impulse which hurls them into the abyss. This imperious princess had come from a land where royalty was all-powerful, and possessed no restraints of conscience. Her character was strong, firm, and unchangeable; a heart of flint, cold, passionless, cruel, and as sharp as a dagger's edge. There was, apparently, no lapse of time between Ahab's informing her of Naboth's refusal to give the king his vineyard, and Jezebel announced plan for dealing with the situation. The contrast between Jezebel and her husband was similar to that which existed between Lady Macbeth and her husband, where the feebler resolution of the man was urged to crime by the bolder and more relentless spirit of the woman.

### The Divine-Human Encounter

(1 Kings 21: 16-20)

*And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.*

Although attention has already been called to the execution of Jezebel's order to have Naboth removed from the scene, it will be helpful to read the text itself. "And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And the two men, the base fellows, came in and sat before him: and the base fellows bear witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him to death with stones. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." (1 Kings 21: 11-

Matthew Henry points out that "never were more wicked orders given by any prince than those which Jezebel issued, and never were they more wickedly and slavishly obeyed by the agents who carried them out. There is not the slightest indication that they so much as questioned a single thing the queen said, to say nothing of offering any remonstrance." Those weaklings promptly obeyed their orders, and just as promptly notified Jezebel that her wishes had been carried out to the letter. And from all indications, it appears that Jezebel received the news of Naboth's death with undisguised satisfaction. It was no concern of hers that Jehovah's name had been profaned, that religion had been dishonored, that justice had been outraged, or that innocent blood had been shed. Jezebel had obtained her object, and she so notified her husband. It seems fair to assume, from 2 Kings 9: 26, that the sons of Naboth were also slain.

Taylor notes that one might have thought that Ahab would have expressed some disapproval of the awful conspiracy which ended in such a tragic horror. But no! Like many in modern times, though his conscience would not allow him to commit the foul deed himself, yet he did not scruple to avail himself of the results of such a crime, when it was planned and carried out by some one else. He probably felt that although he had no direct part in Naboth's death, he might as well be benefited by it; and so he immediately prepared to go and take possession of it.

*And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that*



*which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.*

It is both interesting and profitable to observe that the murder of Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel did more to undermine the throne of those two wicked people, than even the worship of Baal. The very names of Ahab and Jezebel suggest the very acme of sin. The name and character of Jezebel were used by Jesus to express his supreme op-

position to certain practices in the church in Thyatira, as may be seen by reading Revelation 2: 20-23. The manner in which this wicked woman died, should be a constant reminder that the wages of sin is death. (See 2 Kings 9: 30-37; cf. Rom. 6: 23.) The terrible curse which was pronounced upon Ahab and Jezebel by Jehovah, is found in 1 Kings 21: 21-26.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why was Ahab judged to be such a sinner in God's sight?  
Why do so many people act so wickedly at times?  
Discuss some of the predominant influences in the life of Ahab?

### The Golden Text

Why is covetousness such a great sin in God's sight?  
What are some of the things which the Scriptures say about covetous people?  
Why should every child of God endeavor to keep himself from covetousness?

### Ahab's Request and Naboth's Refusal

What is the setting of the lesson now before us?  
Why was Naboth unwilling to part with his vineyard?  
What does all of this suggest regarding the character of Naboth? of Ahab?  
Why is covetousness so completely unlike God?

### Jezebel to the Rescue!

How did Jezebel come to learn of Naboth's refusal to allow Ahab to have his vineyard?  
What did she propose to do about the matter?  
In what way were her plans carried out?  
Why was she so particular about con-

forming to the law of Moses regarding such matters?

What insight do we get from the context regarding the characters of Ahab and Jezebel?

How do you account for Jezebel's being such a wicked woman?

Discuss the manner in which she sought to exercise her influence upon others.

How did she compare with her husband in this respect?

### The Divine-Human Encounter

Discuss the manner in which Jezebel's orders were carried out?

Why did the leaders of the city act so promptly and so slavishly?

What did the executors of Jezebel's orders do after they had stoned Naboth?

How, apparently, did she receive the news of Naboth's execution?

How could she be so hard-hearted about such a terrible crime?

In what way did she go about notifying her husband of the nefarious deed?

How did Ahab react to his wife's heinous crime?

If he couldn't commit the crime himself, how could he accept the benefits of it?

What was Jehovah's reaction to the cruel deed of Jezebel and Ahab's attitude toward it?

Where did the Divine-human encounter take place?

What two things did Elijah say to Ahab?

What curse was pronounced upon the king?

What important lesson should we learn from all of this?

## Lesson V—February 1, 1970

## ELISHA SUCCEEDS ELIJAH

### Lesson Text

### 2 Kings 2: 1-15

1 And it came to pass, when Je-ho'-vah would take up E-li'-jah by a whirlwind into heaven, that E-li'-jah went with E-li'-sha from Gil'-gal.

2 And E-li'-jah said unto E-li'-sha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me as far as Beth'-el. And E-li'-sha said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will

not leave thee. So they went down to Beth'-el.

3 And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth'-el came forth to E-li'-sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Je-ho'-vah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

4 And E-li'-jah said u n t o him,

E-Il'-sha, tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me to Jer'-i-cho. And he said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jer'-i-cho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jer'-i-cho came near to E-Il'-sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Je-ho'-vah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6 And E-li'-jah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Je-ho'-vah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan.

8 And E-li'-jah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that E-li'-jah said unto E-li'-sha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And E-li'-sha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a

hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and E-li'-jah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

12 And E-li'-sha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Is'-ra-el and the horsemen thereof!

And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

13 He took up also the mantle of E-li'-jah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

14 And he took the mantle of E-li'-jah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is Je-ho'-vah, the God of E-li'-jah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they were divided hither and thither; and E-li'-sha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets that were at Jer'-i-cho over against him saw him, they said, The spirit of E-li'-jah doth rest on E-li'-sha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life"* (Rev. 2: 10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 2: 16-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

January 26.	M.	Elijah Ascends (2 Kings 2: 1-11)
January 27.	T.	Elisha, A Teacher and Prophet (2 Kings 6: 15-23)
January 28.	W.	Elisha Heals Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1-14)
January 29.	T.	Elisha, Faithful Servant (2 Kings 6: 1-7)
January 30.	F.	Elisha and the Shunammite Woman (2 Kings 4: 9-37)
January 31.	S.	An Amazing Account (2 Kings 13: 20, 21)
February 1.	S.	Elisha's Acceptance (2 Kings 2: 11, 12)

TIME.—896 B.C.

Places.—CJilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan.

PERSONS.—Elijah, Elisha, and the sons of the prophets.

### Introduction

After a lesson on the life, character, and work of Elijah, it is fitting that we study Elisha from the same points of view. The work of the latter began a short time before the work of the former ended. The first of Elisha's prophetic ministry was contemporaneous with the last of

Elijah's. The work of both prophets was toward a common goal, that of accomplishing the will of God; but when their ministries are considered together, it is easy to see that there was a great contrast between the two men. Elijah was reared, apparently, in the wilds of Gilead, east of

the Jordan; and his person and character partook of the ruggedness of his native mountains. It is quite probable that much of his time, prior to his call to the prophetic office, was spent in the solitude of the hills, with little left for the more populous centers. His appearance, after his inspired work began, was the signal of divine judgment; and his words were frequently followed by terrible manifestations of divine power and vengeance.

Elisha, on the other hand, was brought up in the quiet agricultural district of Ablemeholah. (1 Kings 19: 16.) One would naturally gather from 2 Kings 2: 12 (cf. 2 Kings 1: 8) that Elisha wore the conventional clothing of the East; and we learn from 2 Kings 4: 29 that he carried a staff which, at times, served as his proxy. Unlike his predecessor, Elisha was frequently in cities and towns (2 Kings 6: 13, 19); and he apparently had his own house in Samaria (2 Kings 6: 32). Elisha, as a prophet, had no new truth to proclaim; he simply began where Elijah left off. The Tishbite had fought a battle single-handed, and against great odds; and Elisha had entered into the fruits of his labors. Elijah was, without a doubt, the grander of the two; for it is quite evident that Elisha was great only insofar as he continued and carried out, with more force than any other man of his time, the work which Elijah had begun, namely, the task of defending the ancient religion with a courage which nothing could shake.

The contrast between the two prophets which we are considering today is further seen in their respective tastes. Elijah was content with the secluded areas, while Elisha was cultivated to the point, that he responded to the refinement of court music. (Cf. 2 Kings 3: 15.) The sacred historian has recorded for us only a few grand, impressive scenes in the life of Elijah; but the record is well filled with undated ministries of human helpfulness on the part of Elisha. Consider, for

example, his sweetening the water supply in Jericho (2 Kings 2: 19-22); the rehabilitation of the home which had been devastated, by death, hunger, and debt, and threatened with slavery (2 Kings 4: 1-7); the miraculous restoration of the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4: 8-37); provided food for the people (2 Kings 4: 38-44); the cleansing of Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5: 1-14); the miraculous recovery of the axe-head (2 Kings 6: 1-7); and the providential feeding of the besieged city of Samaria (2 Kings 6: 24-7: 20).

The ministry of Elisha continued for more than fifty years, and it was characterized by such wisdom and popularity, that even kings sought his counsel. At the request of the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, Elisha outlined a plan for channeling and storing water, which not only supplied their needs, but which also became the occasion for the destruction of the hosts of Moab. (2 Kings 3: 4-27.) Elisha, on several occasions, warned the imperiled king of Israel in time for him to escape before the Syrian army could attack him; and when the Syrian king sought to capture Elisha, the prophet was able to lead them to another city, feed them, and then send them on their way back to their place (2 Kings 6: 8-23). The services which Elisha rendered were on such a high spiritual plane, and his ministries so favorably known throughout the surrounding countries, that when he visited Damascus the ailing Syrian king sent to inquire of him regarding the possibility of the letter's recovery. Elisha's answer, so far as the illness was concerned, was favorable; but the prophet informed the messenger that he knew that the king would die, that is, be murdered by the man whom the king had sent to inquire about his health. (See 2 Kings 8: 7-15.) The amazing account of the resurrection of the man, who was cast into Elisha's tomb, is found in 2 Kings 13: 20, 21.

### The Golden Text

*"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life"*  
The words just quoted are taken from the letter which the Lord di-

rected John to send to the angel of the church in Smyrna, one of the seven churches in Asia, which are referred to in the first three chap-

ters of the Revelation. Of all the seven letters which John wrote to those churches, the one to Smyrna is characterized by the most continuous and unbroken tone of praise, notwithstanding the fact that it was a suffering church. The entire verse from which the golden text is taken, reads as follows: "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

Suffering on the part of people who are faithful to the Lord, has been experienced throughout the centuries. The apostle Paul warned Timothy, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12); an Jesus himself charged his disciples, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12: 4, 5). One of the principal reasons why the Lord's people have to suffer such bitter treatment in this life, is because they are identified with the Lord, who is diametrically opposed to the world. In his last discourse to his disciples, the night before his crucifixion, Jesus said, "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of

the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also." (John 15: 18-20.)

"Be thou faithful *unto death*" does not mean "until one's life ends," although that is essential, if we are to meet the Lord in peace; but in the exhortation which is now before us, Jesus is saying that we must endure the worst that evil men can inflict upon us, up to and including death itself. We should always remember that death is by no means the most dreadful experience which can come to a faithful child of God. In speaking of the Lord's triumph over Satan, a voice from heaven said, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death." (Rev. 12: 11.) The following translations should help us to see the significance of the phrase "unto death": "Be faithful, even if you have to die for it." (Weymouth.) "Each one of you must prove to be faithful, even if you have to die." (Williams.) In the words of Vincent, "Not faithful *until the time* of death, but faithful up to a measure which will endure death for Christ's sake." Alford makes this notation: "Not, '*until*': but '*even unto*,' i.e., up to the point or measure of: Let not thy faithfulness stop short of enduring death itself. Cf. Phil. 2: 8."

### The Text Explained

#### The Day When Elijah Went to Heaven

(2 Kings 2: 1-8)

*And it came to pass, when Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Beth-el. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that*

*Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee;*

*for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off; and they two stood by the Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.*

F. W. Robertson, the famous English preacher of Brighton, in commenting on the character of Elijah, notes that the prophet belongs to a class of men who are gifted for special purposes. Their weapon is not love, but truth. They were born, not to win, but to coerce by will. They are self-conquerors, and therefore subduers of others. Such men, stern and inflexible, are qualified to be reformers. These men have few loves, and few private affections; their lives, on the contrary, are public and their interests are national. This accounts for the fact that their characters are sad, being as they are, separated from sympathy; but there is also a corresponding elevation of their influence among men. The less they have as a home here, the more they make for themselves a home in the glory world, and the more they find sympathy in God. Such a man was Elijah; and such was John the Baptist. (Cf. Mal. 4: 5, 6; Matt. 17: 10-13.)

The life of Elijah became more and more uneventful, after the spectacular experiences which were his on Carmel and Horeb. He did indeed come into public view, as circumstances required; but as a rule he lived in retirement and, consequently, in a manner which is less romantic and exciting. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that the prophet spent his twilight years in idleness. If we consider all that is said regarding his later life, it is fair to conclude that, in all probability, his last years may have been his busiest. The time of persecution for that period of Israel's history was largely over, and the schools of the prophets, that is, the schools which were established for the training of young men for the prophetic ministry, were permitted to be carried on in various places.

The prophet Elijah had been taught at Horeb that evil in this world cannot be destroyed by outward efforts and direct assaults. Or, to state the same thing in another way, evil is not a fortress which may be taken according to worldly methods of warfare; if it is to be destroyed, the accomplishment must be by long and laborious efforts at sapping, or by undermining the stronghold. Elijah, as he began his prophetic ministry, apparently thought that the idolatry of his country could be overthrown by a single stroke; but after his experience at Horeb, he was seen closing his life-work by organizing a system of endeavor, which required the co-operation of many men, and which took years to bring to fruition. Some one has observed that the silent and secret influence of these great prophets of Israel, such as Elijah and Elisha, and others, may be likened to the Lord's parable of the little leaven which was hidden in three measures of meal. They kept alive the light of truth, transmitted the knowledge of the true God to the next generation, and trained the sons of the prophets to succeed them, when their work was over. Elijah therefore, at the time of this lesson, was convinced that his work should be slow and unobtrusive, knowing in that way alone it could be sure. He no longer trusted in the devastating wind, earthquake, and fire, but in the still small voice which convinces and inspires.

The closing scenes of Elijah's life were both mysterious and wonderful. It appears that he was informed by Jehovah of his near departure; and that the same information was also vouchsafed to Elisha and the sons of the prophets. The life of the Tishbite had been a hard battle, and he frequently had to stand alone, as he sought to maintain the great cause for which he fought; but he was mistaken in thinking that he was the only true servant of Jehovah who was left upon the earth. But the great prophet's work had now been finished, and had been brought to a successful conclusion. He probably had longed for his heavenly rest many times; but he was strong, brave, and fearless. He had been faithful to God, in spite of the fact that he had

experienced his hours of weakness and reverses. But the prophet's life, on the whole, had been characterized by unflinching faithfulness, untiring obedience, and unflinching adherence to the call of God and duty.

But the time had come for Elijah to leave the world, in which he had tried to bring men back to God, to restore the order which had existed before idolatry wrecked it; and so, for the last time, he surveyed the scene of his earthly career, including the Great Sea, toward the going down of the sun, Carmel, and the distant hills of his native Gilead; and then, in company with Elisha, he journeyed to the consecrated places of Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. His faithful disciple, Elisha, would not be persuaded to leave his master's side, as the two made their round to the sacred places, where much of their work had been done. It is not clear as to whether or not Elijah really wanted Elisha to remain behind; but the probability is that the older prophet was simply testing the younger man's loyalty. The sons of the prophets, at both Bethel and Jericho, gathered around the two older men; and they asked Elisha if he knew that Jehovah would take his master away from him that day. But each time the younger men asked that question, Elisha replied in the affirmative; but immediately asked the sons of the prophets to hold their peace.

When Elijah and Elisha reached the Jordan, the former smote the waters with his mantle; and, as in the days of Joshua (Josh. 3: 14-17), the waters were parted; and the two prophets passed over on dry ground. Later on, the great anti-type of Elijah, John the Baptist, played a prominent role in connection with the Jordan, when he came baptizing, not only the people of Israel, in the Jordan River, but also the Lord Jesus Christ himself. When the two men we are now considering were safely on the eastern side of the Jordan, under the shadows of the mountain of Pisgah and Gilead, they were in the general area where Moses ended his earthly career; but Elijah, unlike the greater prophet who went before him, was to be spared the ordeal of death.

### Elisha's Last Request and His Reaction to Elijah's Departure

(2 Kings 2: 9-12a)

*And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder: and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!*

The request which Elisha made of Elijah should be considered in the light of the law of Moses, regarding the rights of the first born. (Cf. Deut. 21: 15-17.) When this is done, no one will get the idea that Elisha was asking that he be made a greater prophet than Elijah had been. Instead, the younger man wanted to be regarded as the son of the Tishbite, and thereby inherit according to the law of the firstborn. Or to say the same thing in another way, Elisha seemed to be saying that there were other prophets associated with Elijah and him in the work of Jehovah, such as the sons of the prophets, who may be looked upon as spiritual sons; but that he wanted to be regarded as the firstborn among them. It was as if Elisha had said, "Let me by thy successor, the firstborn inheritor of thy spirit, and the one who shall take the lead in continuing thy work."

Elijah, when he heard the request of Elisha, responded by saying that the latter had "asked a hard thing," by which he evidently meant to say that it was not within his power to grant such a request: that prerogative belonged only to Jehovah. (Cf. Matt. 20: 23.) But inasmuch as Elisha had been divinely designated as Elijah's successor (1 Kings 19: 16, 19-21), it was probably revealed unto Elijah, that if the one who made that request met the test of faithfulness, up to the prophet's de-

parture, the Lord would grant the request which he had made. It is also possible that Elijah knew something of the manner in which he would leave this world, and his reply to Elisha may have had some reference to the attitude of the latter, when he saw the miraculous means which were used to take the older prophet to heaven.

It would be most interesting to know what was said by these two friends, as they continued to walk on while waiting from the signal from God; but that is something which we can never know, while here upon the earth. But in due time the chariot and the horses of fire appeared, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha witnessed the entire transaction, and gazed upon the strange and marvelous vision, apparently with complete composure. There are two probable implications in Elisha's cry, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" namely, (1) the younger prophet was calling attention to the "father-son" relationship, referred to earlier in this study, and (2) Elisha may have meant that Elijah had done more for the restoration and prosperity of Israel, than all her chariots and horsemen together had accomplished.

Hastings notes that "the fiery chariots and the horses were the emblem of Jehovah of Hosts. To behold this emblem was pledge of perceiving the manifestation of God, unseen by the world, and of being its herald and messenger, as Elijah had been. Beyond the fact that Elijah so went up to heaven, and that the symbolic manifestation of Jehovah of Hosts was visible to Elijah—Holy Scripture does not tell us anything. And it seems wiser and more reverent not to speculate further on questions connected with the removal of Elijah, and the place whither, and the state to which he was 'translated.' If we put aside such inquiries—since we possess not the means of pursuing them to their conclusions—there is nothing in the simple scriptural narrative, however miraculous, that transcends the general sphere of the miraculous, or that would mark this as so exceptional an instance that the ordinary

principles for viewing the miracles of Scripture would not apply to it.

"Elijah's end was in keeping with his career. From his first abrupt appearance it had been fitly symbolized by the stormy wind and flaming fire which he heard and saw at Horeb, and now these were the vehicles which swept him into the heavens. He came like a whirlwind, he burned like a fire, and in fire and whirlwind he disappeared."

### The Beginning of Elisha's Ministry

(2 Kings 2: 12b-15)

*And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they were divided hither and thither; and Elisha went over.*

As long as Elijah remained with Elisha, the latter could depend upon his teacher; but after the older prophet was taken from him, it became necessary for the younger man to take the lead in fulfilling the mission into which he was about to enter. We should never lose sight of the fact that both men had access to a Higher Leadership, and were never allowed to act with reference to things divine, without the Lord's direction. And it was for this reason that Elisha, when he returned from the place where Elijah left him, to begin his own work as a prophet of Jehovah, came in contact with a power which he had not before experienced personally. The hard thing which he had requested had been granted; and the mantle which fell from Elijah became a symbol of special power to him.

*And when the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho over against him saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.*

This reminds us of that which took place when authority was transferred from Moses to Joshua. (See Josh. 3: 7.) God always properly equipped the leaders whom he raised up.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In speaking from the human point of view, what made the transition from Elijah to Elisha easy?

Discuss the purpose and the contrasts of their personalities and mission.

What were some of the outstanding accomplishments of both men?

Discuss the respective length of the two ministries and their influences on others.

### The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?

What does it mean for one to be faithful unto death?

### The Day When Elijah Went to Heaven

To what particular class of men did the prophet Elijah belong and why was his work so effective?

In what way did he probably spend the latter years of his life?

What great lesson had he learned at Horeb and how did it affect his thinking?

What great change was made in his attack on sin?

What can be said regarding the closing scenes of Elijah's life?

Describe the events of his final day with Elijah.

What other great events took place in connection with the Jordan?

### Elisha's Last Request and His Reaction to Elijah's Departure

What was Elisha's last request of Elijah and why did he make it?

What did Elisha apparently mean by a double portion of Elijah's spirit and why did he want it?

What did Elijah say regarding the younger man's request?

Upon what condition would the request be granted?

In what way did Elijah leave this world?

How did Elisha react to his going away?

What lesson should we learn regarding the prophet's miraculous ascent to heaven?

### The Beginning of Elisha's Ministry

What great change was wrought in Elisha at this time?

What could the prophet of Jehovah always be assured of?

What new power did Elisha experience and under what circumstances did it come to him?

What use did he first make of Elijah's mantle?

Who were observing Elisha at the time and why were they so interested?

What did they recognize regarding Elisha and why?

What does Jehovah always do for those who receive a special mission?

What lesson should we learn from this and especially with reference to our own work in the service of the Lord?

## Lesson VI—February 8, 1970

## ELISHA AND NAAMAN

### Lesson Text

#### 2 Kings 5: 1-4, 9-14

1 Now Na'-a-man, captain of the host of the king of Syr'-i-a, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Je-ho'-vah had given victory unto Syr'-i-a: he was also a mighty man of valor, but *he was a leper,*

2 And the Syr'-i-ans had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Is'-ra-el a little maiden; and she waited on Na'-a-man's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Sa-ma'-ri-a! then would he recover him of his leprosy.

4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Is'-ra-el.

\* \* \* \* \*

9 So Na'-a-man came with his horses and with his chariots, and

stood at the door of the house of E-li'-sha.

10 And E-li'-sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Na'-a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Je-ho'-vah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 Are not Ab'-a-nah and Phar'-par, the rivers of Da-mas'-cus, better than all the waters of Is'-ra-el? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do



some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped

*himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel* (2 Kings 5: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 5: 15-19.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 2. M.....	A Leprous Captain (2 Kings 5: 1-4)
February 3. T.....	An Eventful Visit (2 Kings 5: 5-9)
February 4. W. ....	Naaman Is Healed (2 Kings 5: 10-14)
February 5. T.....	Naaman's Gratitude (2 Kings 5: 15-19)
February 6. F. ....	Leprosy Described (Lev. 13: 13, 14)
February 7. S.....	Another Leper (2 Chron. 26: 16-23)
February 8. S.....	Obedience Essential (Heb. 5: 1-9)

TIME.—894 B.C.

PLACES.—The lands of Syria and Israel.

PERSONS.—Naaman, the kings of Syria and Israel, Elisha, and others.

### Introduction

It is easy to see, when once the record has been carefully read, that Elisha was, in a very real sense, Jehovah's gift to Elijah. The great prophet, also known as Elijah the Tishbite, had scarcely uttered in his magnificent despair, his burning words, "I, even I only, am left" (1 Kings 19: 10), when Jehovah disclosed to him the name of a young man, already prepared to receiving the anointing oil, which would designate him as the successor of Elijah. It appears that the older prophet himself was unable to recognize a kindred spirit; but Jehovah could and did discern a latent reformer in the young farmer at the plow (1 Kings 19: 15-21), just as he had done in the case of Gideon, on the hidden threshing-floor (Judges 6: 11ff). We are not told whether or not Elijah had any previous knowledge of Elisha; but we do know the older prophet was given sufficient instruction, to enable him to find the man who was to be prophet in his stead.

Some one has pointed out that Elisha is the subject of a number of narratives in Second Kings, which not only cursorily mention him in connection with a larger circle of events, but which also revolve around the illustration of his wonderful career. Religious faith has, from time immemorial, been oriented by miracles. Miraculous powers, as observed by thoughtful

people, serve to induce faith; and that is exactly what happened, in many instances, in the case of Elisha's ministry. It should be noted, however, that the miracles of Elisha, on the whole were for the "few," rather than for all the people. The religion of the Israelites had long been established by the miracles of Moses, Joshua, and others; but the terrible apostasy had taken its toll, and the restoration had to be augmented by miracles. Elisha was pre-eminently a prophet and a miracle-worker, as one can easily see by reading the inspired history.

Elisha's place in the divine order of things has been expressed by R. L. Ottley in the following words: "Elisha was, like his master, a man of special spiritual gifts, and exercised a scarcely less powerful influence on his contemporaries. Most significant is the very decided part played by Elisha in the revolution which led to the downfall of Ahab's dynasty and raised Jehu to the throne of Israel. In his conduct at this crisis Elisha was resolutely carrying out the religious policy of his predecessor Elijah, whose constant aim had been the total extirpation of Baal-worship. The career of these two great prophets illustrates very clearly the function of a Hebrew prophet.

"A prophet was a man guided and inspired by God, and acting under commission from him; a man who

looked at contemporary history in the light of those great religious ideas which Moses had transmitted; a watchman who kept his eyes open for the signs of the times and who warned his countrymen of the impending judgments of God; and 'incarnate conscience' who perceived and presented in its true light all that was unjust or corrupt in the ordinary life and social arrangements of his time; who recognized in history, and especially in the disasters which befell his nation, the warnings and the chastisements of Almighty God. Nor can we justly estimate the influence of the Hebrew prophets unless we bear in mind the

relation in which they stood to the nation as a whole. The truths which they preached stood in striking contrast with popular religion. They were successively raised up by the Holy Spirit not as representatives of the beliefs and practices of average Hebrew religion, but as champions who never ceased to struggle against the down-grade tendencies, customs, and beliefs of their countrymen. Their preaching could not fail to be unpalatable to the mass of the people, for the simple reason that the God whom the prophets proclaimed was quite other than he was popularly supposed to be." (*The Hebrew Prophets*, p. 12.)

### The Golden Text

*"I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel."* The words just quoted were spoken by Naaman, just after his remarkable cure which was wrought by Jehovah. The full context reads as follows: "And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him; and he said, Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant. But he said, As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said, If not, yet, I pray thee, let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah. In this thing Jehovah pardon thy servant: when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, Jehovah pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way." (2 Kings 5: 15-19.)

The words which Naaman addressed to Elisha, following his cure of the dread disease of leprosy, may well be spoken of as the confession of his faith in Jehovah; and, as one reads through the Bible, he will frequently find such attitudes displayed toward him, especially by Gentiles, both in the Old Testament and in

the New. Who does not remember the immortal words of Ruth, as she gave voice to the thoughts and determinations of her heart?

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;  
Where thou diest, will I die,  
And there will I be buried:

Jehovah do so to me, and more also,  
If aught but death part thee and me.  
(Ruth 1: 16, 17.)

It is a historical fact that Ruth remained faithful to her pledge, even to the extent that she is reckoned in the lineage of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In one of the two instances in which Jesus is said to have marvelled, it was with reference to the faith of a Gentile, namely, "And when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said unto the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Luke 7: 9.) No one can please God, who does not have faith in him; and if we are willing to take the time, and make the effort to read the examples of faith which have been cited, along with the many others which are recorded in the Scriptures, we can easily learn what it means to believe in the Lord, along with the kind of faith which is pleasing to him.

## The Text Explained

### The Faithfulness of a Little Maiden

(2 Kings 5: 1-4)

*Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given victory unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel.*

There are people who say that they believe the Bible, as a whole, but not everything which is contained therein. For example, they say that there are certain parts of it which should be deleted, and relegated to the realm of myth and tradition. People with this attitude are quick to say that they believe the teaching of Jesus, but not such Old Testament stories as Noah and the ark; Jonah and the whale, Naaman the leper, et cetera. But it is a recorded fact that the Bible is so written and interrelated, as to make it impossible to accept one part of it, while rejecting another. (Cf. Matt. 24: 37-39; 12: 40; Luke 4: 27.) The stories which have just been mentioned, along with all other parts of the Scriptures, are genuine; or the whole Bible, including the teaching of Jesus, is false. This is a lesson which we should always keep in mind.

Naaman therefore was a man who lived in the days of Elisha, and he was highly esteemed by the king of the country—Syria. It should be noted that the victories which were achieved by him for Syria, were made possible by Jehovah. It appears that many people today, even members of the body of Christ, have difficulty in understanding that Jehovah still rules in the kingdoms of men. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17.) The apostle Paul, in his address to the philosophers on Mars Hill, plainly says that Jehovah "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 habitations; that they should seek God." (Read Acts 17: 26.) This is another way of saying that Jehovah has determined the destiny of nations, both as to duration of time and the territory which is occupied.

After relating the standing and achievement on Naaman, as he was seen by the king of Syria, the inspired penmen added, by contrast, the awful words: *but he was a leper*. Leprosy was to the body what sin is to the soul. Leprosy was loathsome, infectious, a cause for separation from those not affected by it, and incurable by man. And keeping in mind the parallel just referred to, what is fouler and more contagious than sin. It separates and alienates families and friends, and will, if it remains unforgiven, for ever separate the sinner from true happiness and from God. And as in the case of Naaman, *great* men are not exempt from this deadly malady. Some people seem to think that great people are due more consideration than others; but it should be remembered that "great" is not a synonym for salvation. Unless great men and women obey the gospel, they are unsaved sinners and will, accordingly, be lost. (Cf. Rom. 2: 11; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.)

One of the redeeming things about Naaman was that he realized that he was a leper. No amount of favor which could be extended to him by his king, or flattery from his admiring people, could lead him to minimize his true condition. But there are people on every side today, who are prone to minimize sin, and offer excuses for disobedience. (Cf. Prov. 28: 13.) No man can be saved until he realizes that he is a sinner (cf. John 16: 7-11), and turns away from his wrong doings in obedience to the Lord. (See Acts 2: 37-39; 1 John 1: 9; Acts 8: 22.)

It is not difficult to imagine how the little Hebrew maiden, who must have been young in years and tender in heart, felt, as she was torn away from her mother and other members of her family, taken into a foreign land, and compelled to live

among alien people. But, whatever may have been her attitude toward the cruel treatment to which she was subjected, she did not forget her religious training, or prove untrue to the principles of right-doing. She knew about God's prophet in Israel; and she had every reason to feel that her lord could be b'lest by him. She was indeed little and humble, and occupied a low station in life; but she was both willing and anxious to be a blessing to others. This is a wonderful lesson for all of us. We have a Saviour who is able to save all who will come unto him; and the world about us is sorely in need of his blessings. We cannot reach every needy person individually; but we can tell those who are close to us of the Lord's interest in them.

### "Behold, I Thought"

(2 Kings 5: 9-12)

*So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*

The word of the little maiden regarding a possible cure for Naaman's leprosy reached the king of Syria, and he made immediate plans to send his highly esteemed servant to seek a cure for his malady. (2 Kings 5: 5-8.) But when Naaman reached the land of Israel, he went to the wrong place, and to the wrong person; for he had been misguided. Instead of going to the prophet, as the little maiden had suggested, Naaman went to the king; for that was according to the instruction which he had received from the monarch of Syria. Naaman could have inquired of the little maiden before leaving home, and

could have had firsthand information regarding the matter; but he may have preferred the king's word to hers. Relatively few people today, who are seeking the salvation of the Lord, are willing to go to humble and insignificant sources for their information. (Cf. Matt. 11: 25, 26; Acts 17: 10-12.)

One likes to think that there are relatively few religiously-inclined people who deliberately want to go to the wrong source for their information regarding the Lord's plan for saving the lost; but when the facts are duly considered, it is certain that the vast majority appear to be satisfied with the creeds and testimony of men, rather than with the revealed word of God itself. When Jesus gave his final commission to his disciples, he told them plainly what to preach (cf. Mark 16: 15, 16); and one has only to read the Book of Acts, in order to see that that is precisely what inspired men preached. (Cf. Acts 2: 36-41; 16: 23-34; 18:8.) But we are frequently told that it doesn't make any difference what one believes, just as long as he thinks he is right. (Cf. Isa. 55: 8, 9.) But that kind of an attitude did not work in Naaman's case. He thought that he was going to the right place, when he went to the king; but he was mistaken. (Cf. Matt. 15: 12-14.)

But Naaman appeared to be sincere; for when he learned that he had gone to the wrong place and person, he immediately went in search of the prophet. There are all too many people today who are unwilling to continue their search for the truth, once they have been disappointed. But after Naaman had found the prophet who was able to put him in touch with God's healing power, it was essential that his faith stand the test which would determine its genuineness. The "word of the prophet" came to him, but that was not what he wanted; and it is still true today than many people want the Lord to save them independently of his revealed message. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45; Rom. 1: 16, 17; 10: 1-3.) Men today are still putting that which they think, up against that which God says; and as long as that situation continues, their salvation will be impossible. (Read Matt. 7: 21-23.)

Naaman clearly understood that which Elisha told him to do; but, as already indicated, that was not what he had expected from the prophet. "But Naaman was wrath, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper." But once he was convinced that dipping in a river was essential to the cure, he preferred other rivers to the one which the prophet designated. "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"

Naaman's reasoning is strikingly reminiscent of the often heard expression, namely, If baptism is essential to salvation, then a drop is as good as an ocean, and sprinkling or pouring is as acceptable therefore as immersion. People who rationalize in this manner never stop to consider the fact that the prophet of the Lord said, Jordan, not Abanah or Pharpar; and the final word of the Lord says "baptism" (immersion Acts 8: 38, 39), and not sprinkling or pouring. Any thoughtful person knows that immersion (dipping), pouring, and sprinkling represent three distinct ideas and actions; and if he will read Lev. 14: 15, 16, he will clearly see the meaning and the action of each of the three terms in question. The Lord will not accept a substitute for that which he has commanded. (Read 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9.)

### From Rage to Reason and Obedience

(2 Kings 5: 13, 14)

*And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*

Naaman was not the last man to turn away from God's way in a rage. God's plan has never been that which man would like for it to

be. The way of the Lord is always characterized by simplicity, and is therefore contrary to human wisdom. (Read Isa. 55: 8, 9; cf. 1 Cor. 1: 20-25.) Naaman was "a great man with his master, and honorable," and, as such, he was evidently a man with a great amount of worldly pride. He apparently felt that the prophet of Israel had not shown him the courtesy which was due a man of his standing; and he, accordingly, felt insulted. Indignation is often the result of wounded vanity. But rage can sometimes produce a wholesome reaction. Naaman's mind, as well as his body, was in need of being made better; and the shock of rage and indignation can sometimes be the beginning of the needed cure. Someone has observed that now, for the first time, the soldier from Syria had come in contact with a fellow-man who had seen through him; had cast aside his splendor and fame, as being of no value in the saving of his soul; and had laid bare his inner self and tested it, in order to see whether or not it was genuine.

The shock of rage and the entreaty of his servants apparently brought Naaman to his senses, and, with a humbler spirit, he decided to follow the direction of the man who had given him the only hope he ever had, with reference to a cure of his dread disease. J. R. Illingworth notes that "obedience, though it may look at first sight like a mere abandonment of our will, is for that very reason capable of becoming the very highest act of will. For our wills are ours to make them thine. To submit our will to God's will, and to make his will our own, is the highest form of self-determination, and therefore the greatest step towards the formation of a character that is truly free; free, that is, not from the law, but by the law,—the law which no longer appears as an alien restraint, because it is incorporated with the self. Hence the ethical and spiritual value of obedience; it is the road, and the necessary and only road to freedom."

It matters little therefore what one does, or does not do, until he surrenders his will to God. Jesus says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that

doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7: 21.) A single mental reservation may render null and void all that one does in obedience to God. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." (James 2: 10.) The term "stumble" is apparently used in the sense of setting aside or violating a commandment of the Lord. The violation of any law makes one a law breaker; and one does not have to break all the laws of the Lord, in order to be a sinner in this respect. A. Cadoux notes that "James looks on the law, not as a number of injunctions, but as a personal relationship . . . not like an examination, where nine right answers will secure a pass, despite a wrong one,

but like a friendship, where a hundred faithfulnesses cannot be set against one treachery." This idea is closely associated with the Christian concept of fellowship with Christ. Transgression of one precept of the Christian rule of faith is a breach of the whole, because it breaks fellowship with the object of faith.

It is well to ask, as we close this lesson, *What was the power which healed Naaman?* Did he understand that it was the Jordan River? Did he praise the water? (Cf. 2 Kings 5: 15.) There are people today who think that those who obey the Lord in baptism, are saved by water. The Lord is the Saviour, but he saves only those who obey him. (Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

In what special way were Elijah and Elisha related?  
What are the principal facts which characterized the ministry of Elisha?  
Discuss the meaning and the work of a prophet.

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of the golden text spoken?  
What was the real purpose which Naaman had in speaking them?  
Name some other great confessions of faith which are recorded in the Scriptures.  
How alone can one demonstrate his genuine faith in the Lord?  
In what way was Jesus affected by such great faith and what did he say about it?  
Why cannot people please God without faith in him?

#### The Faithfulness of a Little Maiden

Why cannot people believe a part of the Bible without believing all of it? Give reasons for your answer and cite some illustrations.  
What does that which has just been said prove regarding Naaman?  
What lesson should we learn here regarding the relation of Jehovah to the nations of men?  
What facts are given in the lesson text regarding Naaman?  
To what is leprosy compared, so far as the teaching of the Bible is concerned?  
Why?  
Why can people not be saved from sin be-

fore they recognize the fact they are sinners?  
What important lessons do we learn from the little maiden of the lesson text?

#### "Behold, I Thought"

When the word of the little maiden reached the king of Syria, what did he immediately do?  
Why did he send Naaman to the king of Israel rather than to the prophet Elisha?  
Where should sinners always go for information regarding salvation from sin?  
Why do so many people go elsewhere?  
How can people always be certain regarding the proper source of such information? Give reasons for your answer and cite some examples.  
In what way did Naaman give evidence of his sincerity in seeking the proper source of help?  
Why was it essential that Naaman's faith be tested?  
In what way is the sinner of today subjected to such a test?  
Why did Naaman object to following the instruction of Elisha?  
What did he propose to do instead and how does all of this find application in sinners today?  
Why won't the Lord accept a substitute for that which he commands?

#### From Rage to Reason and Obedience

Why did Naaman, and why do so many others, turn away from inspired instruction in a rage?  
What lesson did Naaman apparently learn from the prophet that day?  
In what way was he brought to his senses and to obedience?  
What is the real meaning of obedience?  
Wherein was the power which healed Naaman located and what lesson do we learn from it?

## Lesson VII—February 15, 1970

## ELISHAS WICKED SERVANT

## Lesson Text

2 Kings 5: 15-27

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him; and he said, Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Is'-ra-el; now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant.

16 But he said, As Je-ho'-vah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

17 And Na'-a-man said, If not, yet, I pray thee, let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Je-ho'-vah.

18 In this thing Je-ho'-vah pardon thy servant: when my master goeth into the house of Rim'-mon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rim'-mon, when I bow myself in the house of Rim'-mon, Je-ho'-vah pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

20 But Ge-ha'-zi, the servant of E-li'-sha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared this Na'-a-man the Syr'-i-an, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: as Je-ho'-vah liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Ge-ha'-zi followed after Na'-a-man. And when Na'-a-man saw one running after him, he alighted

from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22 And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there are come to me from the hill-country of E'-phra-im two young men of the sons of the prophets; give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment.

23 And Na'-a-man said, Be pleased to take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of raiment, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24 And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And E-li'-sha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Ge-ha'-zi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not my heart *with thee*, when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants?

27 The leprosy therefore of Na'-a-man shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white* as snow.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Be sure your sin will find you out.*” (Num. 32: 23.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 16: 19-30.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 9. M. ....	Disobedience Punished (1 Cor. 10: 1-13)
February 10. T. ....	Elisha, A Man of God (2 Kings 4: 7-16)
February 11. W. ....	Gehazi, A Wicked Man (2 Kings 5: 15-27)
February 12. T. ....	Justice Commended (Amos 5: 10-15)
February 13. F. ....	Deceptive Character of Sin (Hos. 7: 1-10)
February 14. S. ....	The “Way of the Righteous” (Psalm 1)
February 15. S. ....	Putting Away the Evil Day (Amos 6: 1-6)

TIME.—894 B.C.PLACE.—In the land of Israel, probably near Samaria.

PERSONS.—Elisha, Gehazi, and Naaman.

## Introduction

When all the facts are considered, it appears safe to say that the Bible is probably the most carefully written book in the world. This is to say that only that which is essential to God's plan and purpose for the human race is included in the inspired record. The principle just referred to is forcefully illustrated by a statement found in John 20: 30, 31, namely, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." The statement just quoted speaks for itself; and it is expanded by another remark, found further on in the same gospel narrative: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." (John 21: 25.)

If everything, even of great importance, since the beginning of the human race had been made a part of the divine record, it would require more than a lifetime for one to read, to say nothing of carefully studying, the inspired record; and that, of course, would not be practical. The Book of Genesis, for example, covers a period of some twenty-five hundred years; and if a full-size book can be written on *The Day Christ Died*, what would a library of books contain, if all the information regarding everything during the first two and one half millenniums had been recorded! Moses wrote the history of that age, which is the Book of Genesis; and a careful consideration of his plan will show that he selected from the patriarchal dispensation only such incidents and facts, as would most simply and effectively portray the background,

which led up to God's dealings with the Israelites as a nation.

That which has been said in the preceding paragraphs is intended to emphasize the fact that there must have been some fundamental reason for preserving the facts regarding Gehazi; and what is true of him, as a part of the inspired record, is also true of everything else which is contained in the scriptures. This truth should cause us to want to study the Bible carefully, so that we may learn that which God has in store for us. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11.) Hastings points out that Gehazi is one of those men whom later ages have accepted as a type; and his very name has come to be a representative of a peculiar character. We think of Job, for instance, as the innocent sufferer; Jacob, the shrewd bargainer; Solomon, the wise king and philosopher; Daniel, the righteous judge; while Gehazi has come to be known as the courteous liar. Dr. Hastings goes on to say:

"We might call him the Ananias of the Old Testament; and we might further note that his sin, like that of Ananias, was followed by a sudden and signal judgment. The imagination pictures him as an abject figure, a convicted swindler, who shrinks from the presence of his master, branded with the most terrible bodily curse with which a man can be visited, and with a load of moral infamy which neither lapse of time nor depth of charity has ever been able to efface. But he cannot have been all bad and always bad. He is evidently a rather commonplace type of sinner, who could understand his master's power and rough strength, but not any finer or more spiritual qualities. He is self-important and more or less vain, and beneath these surface characteristics there is a strain of covetousness, developing into a besetting sin."

## The Golden Text

*"Be sure your sin will find you out."* The words just quoted were spoken to the two and one half tribes of the Israelites, who requested that they be permitted to have as their inheritance, in the land of Palestine, the territory which they conquered east of the

Jordan, before any of them had crossed the river into the land west of the Jordan. Moses was willing for them to settle east of the river, provided the armed men among them would go over the Jordan with the others, and would continue with them until the territory for the nine



and one half tribes had been made available to them. The immediate context reads as follows: "And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will arm yourselves to go before Jehovah to the war, and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before Jehovah, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, and the land is subdued before Jehovah; then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless towards Jehovah, and towards Israel; and this land shall be unto you for a possession before Jehovah. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure your sin will find you out." (Num. 32: 20-23.)

The practical meaning of sin, as set forth by Paul, is to miss the mark. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 6; 6: 21; 2 Tim. 2: 18—marginal reading.) God has always placed a goal before his people, that is a goal which pleased him, and has commanded them to strive toward it; but if and when they did otherwise, the result was sin—sin, because they missed the mark. Some people do not take the question of sin seriously; but they should remember that sin is a detector. Or, to state the same thing in another way, sin, in the text now before us, is personified and will sooner or later, expose us. A person may endeavor to hide his sin from others, and he may succeed for a long time; but eventually he

discovers that he cannot outrun his sin any longer. It has caught up with him, and employs his conscience to expose him. It has been said that our conscience is a fire within us, and our sins are as fuel. If this fire continues to be fed with our unforgiven sins, the time will come when the heat will become so intense as to be unbearable; and it is then that our sin has succeeded in making known, both to us and to others, our true selves.

It is true that the words of the golden text had a particular application at the time they were spoken by Moses; but we should remember that the truth which they express is not limited to any age or to any people. This truth is a general truth, and it finds its application in the lives of the Lord's people in any age of the world. Sin will never be done with any individual, as long as it remains unforgiven. This should be enough to cause any child of God to repent in shame for everything which he has done which does not please the heavenly Father. God does not want any one to be lost, and he is willing to give any genuinely penitent person a second chance, as long as time continues. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9; Ezek. 33: 11.) It is only when people refuse God's mercy, that he gives them up to the evil one. (See Rom. 1: 28; 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

## The Text Explained

### Gratefulness and a Plea for Mercy

(2 Kings 5: 15-19)

*And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him; and said, Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant. But he said, As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused. And Naaman said, If not, yet, I pray thee, let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah. In this thing Jehovah pardon thy servant: when my master goeth into the house of Rim-*

*mon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, Jehovah pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from a little way.*

After reading the reaction of Naaman to his healing of leprosy, one is made to think of a similar situation during the earthly ministry of Christ. As our Lord was entering a certain village, "there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud

voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." (Luke 17: 11-19.)

It appears safe to say, judging from their actions, that relatively few people who are saved from sin, are truly grateful to God for their redemption. Apparently the majority of such people do not stop to consider that which has been done for them. The terms "think" and "thank" are from the same Anglo-Saxon root; and, as one can easily see, the two words differ only in their middle letter. People who *think* are thankful; and those who are *thankful* are the ones who think. Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, continuously thought about his redemption from sin; and he was therefore always thankful for that which the Lord did for him. And not only did Paul express his thanks to God for his salvation; he never ceased, as long as the opportunity was given to him, to demonstrate his gratefulness by vigorous service in the kingdom of Christ. We know that Jehovah was pleased with Naaman's reaction to his cleansing, for Elisha said to him, "Go in peace"; and that should be an impressive lesson to us today.

There was one problem which Naaman faced, which should not be overlooked. He would have to return to Syria, but healed in body and with an entirely different outlook with reference to religion. He could no longer serve Rimmon, the god of his master; but he felt that he would have to accompany his master to his shrine, when the latter went to worship. When one reads the words of Naaman regarding his participation in this ritual, he almost immediately feels a certain sympathy for him; but when he reflects on the forthright manner in which the captain of the Syrian host told the prophet of his problem, he experiences a feeling of relief and gratification, when the prophet, for all practical purposes, expressed his confidence in Naaman's integrity.

However, with us the expression "bow ... in the house of Rimmon" has come to indicate a dangerous compromise; and no one therefore would be justified in following the example of Naaman in this respect.

### The Unholy Reach of Covetousness

(2 Kings 5: 20-23)

*But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: as Jehovah liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw one running after him, he alighted from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well? And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there are come to me from the hill-country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets; give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment. And Naaman said, Be pleased to take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of raiment, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.*

One of the principles of moral conduct, while in a particular context of less than general application, is set forth in these words, namely, "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he." (Prov. 23: 7.) A person's thinking determines his attitude toward things apart from him, and attitude, as a general rule, motivates action. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death." (James 1: 13-15.)

Someone has noted that character is achieved—not received. It grows out of the substance of a man's soul. It is not put on as a thief might put on a stolen coat; instead, it grows with use. (Cf. Heb. 5: 13, 14.) David Thomas has pointed out that the primary element of a man's character is his controlling disposi-

tion; and he further emphasizes the fact that this principle of character is like the sap of a tree—it runs into every branch of life, and produces, shapes, and colors every part. If this controlling disposition, principle, or dominating factor is sensual, the result is sensuality; if it is selfish, covetousness will follow; but if it is characterized by a sincere and earnest desire to please the Lord, a righteous life will ensue.

If one allows unholy desires to dominate his thinking, or, which is the same thing, if he permits sin to dwell in his heart (cf. Psalm 119: 11), sinful conduct is almost certain to follow. It is almost certain that Gehazi entertained a mercenary spirit within his being, which made his outlook upon the good deed done for Naaman by Elisha entirely different from that of the prophet. Elisha sought to benefit the stranger to Israel's God, by conferring upon him a blessing, free from monetary consideration; while Gehazi sought gain for himself. This is another way of saying that gratuitous services were not in harmony with the selfish spirit of the man who merely observed the transactions. Gehazi's heart was not right in God's sight, and his action therefore, with reference to Naaman, was no accident. (Cf. 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.)

Alexander MacLaren, in commenting on the situation now under consideration, observes, "How differently the same sight affected the man who lived near God and the one who lived by sense! Elisha had no desires stirred by the wealth of Naaman's train. Gehazi's mouth watered after it. Regulate desires and you rule conduct. The true regulation of desires is found in communion with God. Gehazi had a sordid soul, like Judas; and, like the traitor apostle, he was untouched by contact with goodness and unworldliness. Perhaps the parallel might be carried farther, and both were moved with coarse contempt for their master's silly indifference to earthly good. That feeling speaks in Gehazi's soliloquy. He evidently thought the prophet a fool for having let 'this Syrian' off so easily. He was fair game, and he had brought the wealth on purpose to leave it. Profanity speaks in uttering a solemn oath on such an occasion. The

putting side by side of 'the Lord liveth' and 'I will run after him' would be ludicrous if it were not horrible. How much profanity may live close beside a prophet, and learn nothing from him but a holy name to sully in an oath!"

The terrible danger of allowing an unrighteous attitude to remain in one's heart, is forcefully set forth in the following words: "No man can be covetous at heart for long without his covetousness finding some embodiment in his life. True, it will not necessarily embody itself in falsehood and theft, but there will be danger of its leading on even to these vices. The commercial world is only too full of illustrations of this danger. Many a man has begun by just being too fond of money, too desirous of making a show in the world, too anxious to get gain; and he has ended by obtaining goods on false pretenses, or by forging some document, or embezzling some money, or using false weights and measures, or telling lies to cheat the revenue, or tampering with figures in a cashbook, or misleading and defrauding his creditors, or representing goods to be what they are not, or robbing widows and orphans who have trusted their money to his keeping, or using some other of the thousand and one methods by which human beings trick each other for gain. And, alas! we sometimes find that such fraud has been going on where we would never have expected it; that some member of a Christian church, whom everybody has believed to be devout and upright, has been living—it may be for years even—the life of a liar and a thief. Talk of the lofty graces of Christianity! Why, it sometimes seems as if we had need to come back again to the grand old simple virtues of honesty and truth." (T. C. Finlayson.)

### The Dreadful End of Gehazi

(2 Kings 5: 24-27)

*And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him,*

*Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned, from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.*

The attitude and conduct of Gehazi may well serve as a kind of standard for self-examination on our part. He knew that he was living daily under the prophetic guidance of Elisha. He was well aware of the prophet's miraculous ability, and that should have impressed him with the truth that he could not violate the principles of righteousness, without Elisha's knowing about it. Why, then, would Gehazi reach out his hand for that which his master had rejected; and then lie about his conduct, when the prophet asked him where he had been?

The first thing that we should consider, as we attempt to explain the attitude and conduct of Gehazi, is that professed Christians, who should realize that they are continuously under the watchful eye of the Lord, and not merely a prophet; but notwithstanding this solemn truth, they are almost daily doing substantially that which the servant of Elisha did. Why do they do such things, when they know that they cannot hide anything from the Lord? To ask this question is to answer it; and this very thing should cause all of us to realize something of the value of the Old Testament lessons to us. (Cf. Rom. 15: 4.) God is constantly showing us by the examples of old, that he knows our every thought and action.

And too, Jesus plainly teaches us that man is going to speak from the abundance of his heart, when he is confronted by a situation which demands that he make some kind of a reply. (Cf. Matt. 12: 33-37.) When people allow evil principles to abide in their hearts, they are going to speak and act accordingly, when a situation requires that they express themselves. Mankind, since the days of Adam and Eve, have sought to excuse and/or justify themselves

before God for their misconduct; but they never have, and they never will, succeed in that endeavor.

There was a stern justice in the penalty which followed the unrighteous conduct of Gehazi. The servant of Elisha thought that he wanted that which belonged to Naaman, that is, if he could be the judge of what it was that he wanted; but what he did not realize, was that he would have to take that of the Syrian's, which was the cause of his coming to Elisha. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Naaman's leprosy would have to go along with his wealth. The captain from Syria had offered to give some material wealth to Elisha, as a token of his appreciation for his cure; but the man of God could not accept that, lest it should appear that he was being reimbursed for his goodness to the afflicted man. But Gehazi, who had nothing to do with the actual benefit which Naaman received, felt that it was not proper to allow the man to return to his country with that which he had planned to give to the prophet. But Gehazi was wrong in that, because it involved a serious injury to the cause of true religion.

The Interpreter's Bible thinks that it is sad that the chapter from which the lesson is taken, had to record, before it ended, the avarice and attempted deception of the servant of Elisha. But the aim of the Bible is to reveal the pertinent facts in each instance of recorded history; and here is an inspired illustration of the manner in which man's lust gets him into sin. To quote again from the New Testament: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." (James 1: 13-15.) And so Gehazi takes his place in Scripture along with Achan, Judas, and Ananias, who sold their souls for material gain; and no one can even estimate how many like-minded people have joined them since the days of inspiration.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is meant by saying that the Bible is probably the most carefully written book in the world?

What over-all plan is followed by the writers of the Holy Book?

Why was such a plan essential?

What probable reason can you give for preserving the facts regarding Gehazi?

### The Golden Text

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

What is the practical meaning of sin, as stated by Paul? Illustrate.

In what sense will sin find one out?

How do we know that the truth expressed in the golden text has a general application?

When, and only when, is sin done with the individual sinner?

How do we know the feeling of God regarding sin?

### Gratefulness and a Plea for Mercy

What was Naaman's reaction to his being cured of leprosy?

How do we know something of the feeling of the Lord in this respect?

What lesson should we get here regarding those who are saved from their sins?

Who are usually the most thankful of people and why is this so?

What peculiar problem did the cured Naaman face and how did he propose to deal with it?

What application, if any, does the principle have with Christian people today?

Give reasons for your answer.

### The Unholy Reach of Covetousness

What principle of moral conduct is seen

with reference to the conduct of Gehazi?

Why does one's thinking usually determine his action?

What New Testament teaching do we have regarding this issue?

What is the general way in which character is developed?

In what way, generally speaking, can the final outcome of character-building be determined?

Why, then, should a person who wants to please God always make certain that his heart is pure?

How do you account for the different reactions of Elisha and Gehazi toward Naaman's wealth?

What is certain to happen to the man who allows covetousness to abide in his heart?

Discuss the general application of this truth in the lives of people today.

In view of these tragic results, should more teaching, on the part of the leadership of the church, be done on this vital question?

### The Dreadful End of Gehazi

What special benefit may the Lord's people today get from studying the record of Gehazi?

Why would a man who lived so close to the prophet allow himself to commit such a sin?

What application does the course which he followed find in professed Christians today?

How do you account for Gehazi's lie to Elisha?

What general teaching do we have throughout the Bible on this question?

What important lesson do we learn from the fact that Naaman's leprosy passed on to Gehazi?

Why did Elisha refuse the gifts which Naaman offered to him?

## Lesson VIII—February 22, 1970

## FAMINE IN ISRAEL

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 7: 1-15

1 And E-li-sha said, Hear ye the word of Je-ho'-vah: thus saith Je-ho'-vah, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be *sold* for a shek'-el, and two measures of barley for a shek'-el, in the gate of Sa-ma'-ri-a.

2 Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if Je-ho'-vah should make *windows* in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate: and

they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syr'-i-ans: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syr'-i-ans; and when they were come to the outermost part of the camp of the Syr'-i-ans, behold, there was no man there.

6 For the Lord had made the host of the Syr'-i-ans to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Is'-ra-el hath hired against us the kings of the Hit'-tites, and the kings of the E-gyp'-tians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, punishment will overtake us; now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city; and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syr'-i-ans, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of

man, but the horses tied, and the asses tied, and the tents as they were.

11 And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's household within.

12 And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syr'-i-ans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive, and get into the city.

13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city (behold, they are as all the multitude of Is'-ra-el that are left in it; behold, they are as all the multitude of Is'-ra-el that are consumed); and let us send and see.

14 They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syr'-i-ans, saying, Go and see.

15 And they went after them unto the Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syr'-i-ans had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.

Golden Text.—*"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt. 6: 33.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Kings 6: 24-33.

### Daily Bible Readings

February 16. M.....	Israel's Sin (2 Kings 17: 1-12)
February 17. T.....	Judgment on Israel (2 Kings 17: 13-18)
February 18. W.....	Israel's Overthrow Predicted (Isa. 8: 5-10)
February 19. T.....	Israel's End Foretold (Amos 8: 1-14)
February 20. F.....	Amos Warns Israel (Amos 6: 1-8)
February 21. S.....	Effects of Sin (Prov. 1: 20-33)
February 22. S.....	Punishment for Sin (1 Chron. 28: 9; Rom. 11: 22)

Time.—892 B.C.

Place.—Samaria.

Persons.—Elisha, the king of Israel, the captain, and others.

### Introduction

A famine may be described as a general scarcity of food and other necessities of life; a destitute situation which is characterized by hunger and possible starvation. A condition like this could be brought on by a lack of harvest, or because the people involved are shut off from the supply of that which is so desperately needed. If one will take the time, and make the effort, to

read that which the Bible says about famines, he will soon see that it was never God's intention that his people be plagued by such misfortunes. For example, "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give your rains in their seasons, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield fruit. And your threshing shall

reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land." (Lev. 26: 3-6; cf. verses 14-20.) This, as one can easily see, was a conditional promise of God; and it would have been fulfilled, if the people had done their part.

People who are familiar with the history of the Bible, are aware of the fact that the people of Israel were almost continuously disobeying Jehovah. As Moses was preparing to relinquish his leadership of Israel, because of his approaching death, he warned the people of the Lord what to expect, because of their failure to serve "Jehovah thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things." Moses then went on to show something of the terrible sufferings which they would endure, including sieges of their walled cities by their enemies. And being thereby cut off from the food supplies, the famine would reach the point at which parents would eat their own children, even in secret to keep other members of

the family from satisfying their hunger by means of the same "food." (Read Deut. 28: 47-57.)

The devotional reading for today's lesson gives a graphic account of the fulfilling of the prediction which was made by Moses. Mothers were actually boiling and eating their own children, because of their terrible hunger which seized them during the siege which the king of Syria had put into effect against Samaria. It appears that the king of Israel did not really know about the terrible things which were going on in the city, until one of the women appealed to him for help, as he walked upon the wall of the city; and when he learned that the women were actually cooking and eating their own children, he did that which sinful people usually do, namely, try to make some one else responsible for the terrible conditions which they have to endure. The king, then and there, swore vengeance on God's prophet, perhaps the only man who had spoken against the sinful ways which the king and his people were pursuing. (Cf. 1 Kings 18: 16-18; 21: 17-20.) The human race is so steeped in sin, as to make wars, famines, and other disturbances of nature inevitable (cf. Nah. 1: 2-8; Luke 21: 25-28; Rom. 8: 31-39); but God is both willing and able to take care of those who put their trust in him.

### The Golden Text

*"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"*

The passage just quoted is taken from that part of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus discusses man's absolute need for trust in God. The immediate context is one of the truly great, as well as one of the most beautiful, passages of the New Testament; and it should be read frequently—Matthew 6: 25-34. The passage which serves as the golden text is the seventh, in a series of eight reasons, which Jesus gives for not being anxious regarding the two great objects of men's concerns, namely, (1) life—its prolongation; and (2) the body—its comforts and needs. The basis for the attitude, which the Lord requires, demands that we put first things first. This should and must

be the aim of every one, if he expects to please God. Paul was emphasizing this same idea, when he said, "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him." (2 Cor. 5: 9.) Everything must be subordinated to this goal, if the greatest good is to be realized. The kingdom of God which we are to seek is a great ideal, which finds full expression in the New Testament. It is God's government for his people; and if one seeks his kingdom, and his righteousness, he will endeavor to bring himself into complete harmony with the divine will.

When people are willing to make the necessary adjustments in their lives, and actually put into practice that which they are told to do, God will always do his part. If we will read that which Jesus says regard-

ing trust in God, it will be much easier for us to see the force of the promise which is contained in the words of the golden text. "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure unto his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Where-withal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for

the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

The quest for the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, requires detachment, as well as concentration. Practically every responsible person is influenced by his material surroundings, and the society into which his life has been cast; but he must not become so involved in the existing material order, that all is lost if it is destroyed. The child of God must have spiritual values which will survive social changes and economic ruin. This is the course which Jesus urges his followers to pursue; and if they seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, they will have that which is both indestructible and eternal. And then, if all that which is worldly is destroyed, they will still have that which cannot be taken away from them. (Cf. Luke 12: 15.) The addition of the material things which Jesus says will come to the faithful child of God, is not due to the miraculous; they will come as a result of our giving attention to the true laws of our being, as we live under and trust in the providential workings of our heavenly Father. Some one has said, "Let religion be the first thing in our affections, and in our labors; and Providence will be our mighty partner and helper in business." (Cf. Psalm 37: 25.)

### The Text Explained

#### An Extraordinary Prediction

(2 Kings 7: 1, 2)

*And Elisha said, Hear ye the word of Jehovah: thus saith Jehovah, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if Jehovah should make windows in the heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*

Those students who are familiar with the Bible itself, will easily see that the chapter division, in the situation now before us, is made in the middle of a paragraph. This, of

course, means that one should read the entire paragraph, if he is to get the full significance of the passage in question. The story of the siege of Samaria, by the army of Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, and the remarkable way in which it was lifted, is told in the devotional reading for today, as already pointed out. Joram, sometimes called Jehoram, the son of Ahab, was king in Israel; and Elisha was at the height of his prophetic career. The sword was without the city of Samaria, and a terrible famine was being experienced within; and when Joram became aware of that which was taking place within the city, he undertook to place the blame for the shocking conditions on the shoulders of the prophet of God. It appears that the king really meant to mur-



der the prophet, but may have realized the foolishness of such an act, before he reached Elisha's house. It is not entirely clear as to who spoke the closing words of chapter 6, but it was probably the king himself; but be that as it may, the prophet gave the Lord's answer to the situation.

The famine in the city had reached such proportions, as to result in an ass's head being sold for eighty pieces of silver, or about fifty dollars of our money. And if the *head* of an ass brought that kind of a price, what would have been the cost of the whole animal, or the more desirable pieces! Bible students are not agreed regarding the meaning of "dove's dung." Some take it literally, while others take the expression to mean some kind of course lentil or pulse, which was used for food.

When we take into consideration that starving men have greedily devoured such substances as tanned leather, glue, ground wood, and all kinds of tainted garbage, it should not be thought strange, or beyond belief, that dove's dung was actually eaten in the besieged city, during the last agony of despair. Furthermore, if mothers could boil and eat their own children, they certainly would not hesitate to eat dove's dung, if the opportunity presented itself. Josephus, in speaking of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, in A.D. 70, says, "A while afterward, it was not possible to gather herbs by reason the city was walled about, some persons were driven to that terrible distress as to search the common sewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung which they got there; and what they of old could not endure so much as to see, they now used for food." (Wars, 5: 13, 7.)

A "kab" was nearly three pints, United States measure. A fourth of a kab, then, would be less than one pint; and that amount sold in Samaria, during the siege, for a little more than three dollars, our money. These facts indicate some of the distressing conditions which prevailed within the city; but they by no means tell all the story, as we have already seen. It appears that nothing could be worse than mothers cooking and eating their own children. Let us remind ourselves

again that Moses warned of this very thing; but people then, as they do now, apparently paid little attention to the preacher of righteousness. Disobedience to God's word always brings distressing conditions; and there is no telling to what extremities one may be driven, who deliberately refuses, or even neglects, to listen to the divine testimony. (Cf. Gal. 6: 7, 8; Heb. 10: 26-31.)

### The Process at Work

(2 Kings 7: 3-8)

*Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians; and when they were come to the outermost part of the camp of the Syrians, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and, a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when those lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.*

We have already seen that the prophet Elisha, in the face of the wrath of the king of Israel, calmly and confidently announced that the siege would be lifted before another day had passed; and that food would be in great abundance in the gate of Samaria. The prophet gave no indication of how these things would come to pass; but he left no doubt regarding the truthfulness of

his prediction. He was speaking for God, and God, of course, knew the answer to the situation. The section of the lesson text now before us, tells the story of that which actually took place.

The Bible reveals three principal ways in which the work of God has been accomplished, namely, (1) miraculous, (2) natural, and (3) providential. A miracle is an act of God, independent of any law, except his own will; a work of nature is an act of God, in accordance with the laws of nature, which were ordained by God; an act of providence is an act of God in which he employs natural means. We know that miracles, so far as people being able to perform them, are no longer possible; but it is equally true that God has not lost any of his miraculous power. We have no means of knowing just how much of the miraculous is employed everyday, as God oversees and cares for his people (cf. Heb. 1: 13, 14); and that question has no relevancy in our thinking and living.

But in the case now before us, it is easy to see that, aside from the sound which frightened the Syrian soldiers, the events which led up to the lifting of the siege of Samaria, and the supplying of the food for the people of the city, were the result of natural movements on the part of the actors. If the lepers had not been in dire need of food, they would not have gone to the camp of the Syrians; and, after finding the abundant supply of food and other items which are essential to living, they were prompted by a feeling of social responsibility, and perhaps religious obligation, to tell the news of their find to the leaders within the city walls. The result was, as we shall see later, that the famine came to an end.

We are not specifically informed as to the precise nature of the sound which the soldiers heard. It could have been a miraculous sound of chariots and horses, or it could have been a natural sound of wind blowing in the trees, which produced a sound, for all practical purposes, like the actual sound of horses and chariots. (Cf. 2 Sam. 5: 24; 2 Kings 19: 7.) But whatever may have been the nature of the sound which the Syrians heard, it was produced by the Lord, and it was used by him

to frighten the soldiers from the outskirts of the city. In the words of William Cowper:

God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants his footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines

Of never-failing skill

He treasures up his bright designs,

And works his sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage  
take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust him for his grace:

Behind a frowning providence

He hides a smiling face.

### The Flight of the Syrians Made Known and Confirmed

(2 Kings 7: 9-15)

*Then they said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, punishment will overtake us; now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city; and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but the horses tied, and the asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's household within. And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp, to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive, and get into the city. And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; behold they are as all the multitude of Israel that are consumed); and let us send and see. They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. And they went after them unto the Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments*

*and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.*

If every Christian would manifest the spirit of the four lepers, and tell the story of their great discovery of salvation to the people who need to know about it, we would see a program of personal evangelism, such as has not been manifested since the early days of the church. The unfortunate sufferers of the lesson now under consideration, recognized their own responsibility; and they became keenly aware of what would happen to them, if they held their peace. It is interesting to note that the marginal reading of "punishment will overtake us," is *our iniquity will find us out*. (Cf. Num. 32: 23.)

The king of Israel, as would be expected, was skeptical, when he heard the report of the leprous evengels, and he very quickly offered his own word of explanation. There is no reason to think that the king was in any way influence by the prediction which Elisha had made regarding the events of the next day, and he therefore entertained no hope that some good news might be in prospect. But, as in the case of Naaman, it was a servant who recognized the wisdom of making an investigation; and when that was done, there was no way to measure the results for good. (Cf. 2 Kings 5: 13.)

It should be kept in mind that the king's officer who came to Elisha's house, and who heard the prophet's prediction, refused to believe it. "The captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if Jehovah should make windows in heaven,

might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." It is sad to note that this kind of skepticism did not die with that official. There are people today who claim to believe in and follow Christ, who cannot bring themselves to believe that the Lord will provide for their every need, if they seek first his kingdom, and his righteous; yet that is exactly what every faithful child of God has the right to expect. (Cf. Phil. 4: 19; Heb. 13: 5, 6.) The closing paragraph of the chapter from which the lesson text for today's study is taken, tells how the prediction which Elisha made came true.

"And the people went out, and plundered the camp of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of Jehovah. And the king appointed the captain on who hand he leaned to have charge of the gate: and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died as the man of God has said, who spake when the king came down to him. And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria; and that the captain answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if Jehovah should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? and he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof: it came to pass even so unto him; for the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died" (2 Kings 7: 16-20.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What is a famine and what does the Bible teach regarding them?

What prediction did Moses make regarding such disastrous experiences?

In what way was his prophecy fulfilled at the time of this lesson?

#### The Golden Text

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

Why does Jesus place such great stress on our trust in Jehovah?

What must the Lord's people always be willing to do, as it respects the world?

What does the quest for the kingdom of God. and his righteousness, require?

#### An Extraordinary Prediction

Against what background are the events of this lesson recorded?

Give the principal facts which we are to cover today.

To what extent had the famine affected the city of Samaria?

What does the context reveal regarding the high cost of living?

Why were the people of Samaria in such straitened circumstances?

What important lesson should we learn from all of this?

### The Process at Work

Under what circumstances did Elisha announce the coming of an abundance of food?

Why could the prophet speak with such confidence?

What are the three principal ways in which God has accomplished his works?

Give the meaning of each method and indicate how it works.

Why did the Syrian soldiers suddenly decide to flee from their camp?

Discuss the miraculous and the natural movements which resulted in food for the hungry people of Samaria.

What does the Bible teach regarding the providential workings of God?

What effect does a knowledge of these truths have on the faithful children of God?

### The Flight of the Syrians Made Known and Confirmed

From what motives did the leprous men do their part in the drama now before us?

What lesson should we learn from their example?

What can be done to bring about more action on the part of the Lord's people today in this respect?

Why was the king skeptical regarding the report the four lepers brought to the city?

In what way did he propose to explain the situation?

What caused him to investigate the matter and what lesson do we learn from this?

What other man expressed his disbelief of the prophet's prediction and what did he say about it?

Why do so many professed Christians manifest so little confidence in the Lord's promises?

## Lesson IX—March 1, 1970

# DEATH OF WICKED JEZEBEL

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 9: 6-10, 30-37

6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him. Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, I have anointed thee king over the people of Je-ho'-vah, even over Is'-ra-el.

7 And thou shalt smite the house of A'-hab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Je-ho'-vah, at the hand of Jez'-e-bel.

8 For the whole house of A'-hab shall perish; and I will cut off from A'-hab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Is'-ra-el.

9 And I will make the house of A'-hab like the house of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, and like the house of Ba'-a-sha the son of A'-hi-jah.

10 And the dogs shall eat Jez'-e-bel in the portion of Jez'-re-el, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.

30 And when Je'-hu was come to Jez'-re-el, Jez'-e-bel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and attired her

head, and looked out at the window.

31 And as Je'-hu entered in at the gate, she said, Is it peace, thou Zim-ri, thy master's murderer?

32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot.

34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink; and he said. See now to this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter.

35 And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

36 Wherefore they came back, and told him. And he said, This is the word of Je-ho'-vah, which he spake by his servant E-li'-jah the Tish'-bite, saying, In the portion of Jez'-re-el shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jez'-e-bel;

37 And the body of Jez'-e-bel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jez'-re-el so that they shall not say, This is Jez'-e-bel.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."* (Prov. 10: 27.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—1 Kings 21: 1-17.

## Daily Bible Readings

February 23. M.....	Jezebel's Wicked Plan (1 Kings 21: 1-10)
February 24. T.....	The Plan Carried Out (1 Kings 21: 11-16)
February 25. W.....	Elijah Denounces the Sin (1 Kings 21: 17-26)
February 26. T.....	Death of Ahab (1 Kings 22: 29-36)
February 27. F.....	Jehu Anointed King (2 Kings 9: 11-16)
February 28. S.....	Jehu's Judgment on Jezebel (2 Kings 9: 30-37)
March 1. S.....	Others Destroyed (2 Kings 10: 1-11)

TIME.—884 B.C.

PLACES.—Ramoah-gilead and Jezreel.

PERSONS.—A young prophet, Jehu, Jezebel, and others.

### Introduction

The basis for this lesson had its setting in the latter part of first kings. Elijah the prophet had just passed through his great experience in one of the caves of mount Horeb. He thought that his work was practically over; but after what happened at the mount of God, he was made to realize that much unfinished business was yet to be accomplished by him. No man who has entered the service of Christ should ever think that there is nothing else for him to do, so long as the Lord permits him to live. Such a person may feel that he has passed over the crest of the hill, and that his pathway is rapidly descending toward the western horizon; but he should remember that his work is not over, so long as the Lord bids him to follow him. God had something else for Elijah to do, before he took him to the glory world, as may be seen from the following quotation:

"And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." (1 Kings 19: 15-18.)

Jehovah has never turned the affairs of men entirely over to them; and there is every reason to think that as long as the earth continues,

he will continue to rule in the governments of this world. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Acts 17: 26.) God had promised to punish the wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel; and this was his way of doing it. Some people have questioned the goodness of Jehovah, in ordering such wholesale slaughter as was carried out in the case now under consideration; but they evidently forget (1) that sin must be adequately punished, and (2) that during the fleshly reign of the people of the Lord, such punishment was direct, and was apparently something of a type of the punishment which will be inflicted when this life is over. David Lipscomb sums up the situation in this way: "Sin must be destroyed, and punishment, as we learn from the Old Testament, was graduated according to the condition of the sinner. If he was not hopeless, the chastisement of a Father was laid upon him to correct him; but if he was hardened to sin, joined to his idols, hopeless in his position, a fearful destruction and complete separation from God was visited upon him." We may be certain that the Judge of all the earth will do right. (Cf. Gen. 18: 22-33.)

It is essential therefore, if we are to understand the manner in which God deals with sinful humanity, that we keep these two types of punishment in mind. The divine methods which were cited by Brother Lipscomb are distinct, the one from the other; and they are intended for two classes of people, namely, those who are not completely alienated from God, and the hopeless. Jehovah never sends the punishment of final destruction upon his people, no matter how

weak and disobedient they may be, so long as there is hope of reformation; but when people are hopelessly estranged from God, he never merely chastises them. It is not God's will that any should perish (cf. Ezek. 33: 11; 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); and if any one will take the time, and make the effort, to see

that which the Bible says regarding the subject, he will see that Jehovah has never made it impossible for any sinner to turn from evil, and follow the good. But when people deliberately follow the course which was pursued by Ahab and Jezebel, there is absolutely no hope for them. (Cf. Rev. 2: 20-23.)

### The Golden Text

*"The fear of Jehovah prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened"* These are general statements, and they are, as a rule, true of the two classes of people in question. The passage which serves as the golden text reminds us of a similar one, found in the New Testament, namely, "For,

He that would love life,  
And see good days,  
Let him refrain his tongue from  
evil,

And his lips that they speak no  
guile:

And let him turn away from evil,  
and do good;

Let him seek peace, and pursue it.  
For the eyes of the Lord are upon  
the righteous,  
And his ears unto their supplica-  
tion:

But the face of the Lord is upon  
them that do evil."

(1 Pet. 3: 10-12.)

Not only do the righteous please the Lord by the way they live: they also are more careful in following the fundamental laws of health; and this is helpful in the prolongation of life here upon the earth. Furthermore, such people are always conscious that they are daily walking in the favor of Jehovah, and they always have a brighter outlook on life. But when people give themselves over to evil, the whole situation is different; and

they eventually, as indeed will the righteous, reap that which they sow. The apostle Paul says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." (Gal. 6: 7, 8.)

The two contrasting lives are pictured in the middle part of the fourth chapter of Proverbs: "Hear, O my son. and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in paths of uprightness. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and walk not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on. For they sleep not, except they do evil; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Prov. 4: 10-19.)

### The Text Explained

A New King Anointed and  
Commissioned  
(2 Kings 9: 6-10)

*And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of Jehovah, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the*

*blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Jehovah, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel. And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel*

*in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.*

The lessons which we are studying this quarter do not cover the entire inspired record of the kings of Israel; and it is for this reason that the portion which is not covered should be read, along with the portion which is covered. If this is done, it will be seen that Ahaziah succeeded his father Ahab, as king of Israel. His reign, however, was cut short by an accident; and he was, in turn, succeeded by his brother Jehoram, who reigned for twelve years. Both of these sons, like their father, were extremely wicked. We are told that, on one occasion, when Jehoram sought to consult Elisha regarding an attack which he, along with the kings of Judah and Edom, was contemplating against the king of Moab, the man of God said to him, "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay; for Jehovah hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." (2 Kings 3: 13, 14.)

The preceding part of the chapter from which the lesson text for today is taken, tells of the manner in which Jehu came to be the king of Israel, and they should be read as a part of the preparation for the lesson. The purpose which Jehovah had in making Jehu king, was to avenge his servants who had suffered at the hands of Ahab and Jezebel. The destruction of the house of Ahab was foretold by Elijah, following the murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21: 17-26); but because Ahab humbled himself before Jehovah, the prophet was told by Jehovah that the destruction, which was certain, would be delayed until after the death of Ahab. (Read 1 Kings 21: 27-29.) Jehovah has always been merciful, and has showed kindness, whenever it was consistent with his righteous nature (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9); but when people degrade themselves, as Ahab did, the day of reckoning is certain to come.

Jehu had been among the horsemen who had ridden with Ahab, when he went to Jezreel to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, following the latter's death. He had also heard the terrible words of Elijah, as he pronounced the awful doom of the king; and we may be certain that those words made a deep impression on the man who was later to become the instrument of Jehovah for ending both the reign and the house of Ahab. (See 2 Kings 9: 25, 26.) But Jehu had apparently kept his thoughts regarding these matters to himself, as he continued to enjoy the confidence of the king of Israel. He was, in fact, one of the captains in Jehoram's army, and was, at the time of this lesson, engaged, along with others, at Ramoth-gilead. (See 2 Kings 8: 28, 29.) Joram, which is the abbreviated form of Jehoram, had gone to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead; but because of a wound in the conflict, the king of Israel had left the army, to return to Jezreel to be healed.

After the secret anointing of Jehu, his fellow soldiers became curious and wanted to know why this "mad fellow" came to him. Jehu tried to pass the matter off lightly; but when the others insisted on knowing the truth, he told them that he had been appointed king over Israel. This apparently pleased Jehu's fellow officers, and they immediately gave evidence of their loyalty to him. "And Jehu said, If this be your mind, then let none escape and go forth out of the city, to go to tell it in Jezreel." The reason why Jehu did not want the news of his becoming king known in Jezreel, is stated in these words, namely, "For Joram lay there." We have already noted that the wounded king of Israel had departed from Ramoth-gilead, and had gone to Jezreel where he could get medical attention. "And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram, because he was sick." (See 2 Kings 8: 29.) It is interesting to observe that both the king of Israel and the king of Judah were named "Jehoram"; and it may have been to distinguish them that the king of Israel was frequently called by the abbreviated title of *Joram*.

And so, after taking the necessary

precaution to see that no one made his way to Jezreel to see the ailing king, to inform him of what was being done, Jehu got into his chariot, and rode headlong into the city where Joram was hoping to recuperate from his wounds. However, a watchman on the tower of the city reported the approaching company, and a messenger was promptly dispatched, with instructions to determine the nature of the mission. But Jehu refused to give the messenger any information, and ordered him to fall in behind him and those who were with him. When the first messenger failed to return, a second messenger was sent out with the same instructions, but he also met with the same fate. The watchman on the tower, as he had done in the case of the first messenger, reported the result; and then added, "And the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." (See verse 20.)

After the two messengers who were sent out from the city failed to get a report concerning the approaching company, Joram decided to take the matter into his own hands. "And Joram said, Make ready. And they made ready his chariot. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu, and found him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah." (Verses 21-23.) It was then that Jehu shot Joram, and told Bidkar his captain to cast him into the field of Naboth, as he reminded him of their experience, when Elijah spoke the words of doom to Ahab. We must keep in mind the fact that Jehu was charged with the total destruction of the house of Ahab, and not merely the death of Jezebel. (Cf. 2 Kings 9: 24-26.)

If any one should wonder why Jehu slew Ahaziah the king of Judah too, the answer to his question is probably found in the fact that the king of Judah was also a

member of the house of Ahab. Ahaziah's father Jehoram was the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and his mother was Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. (See 2 Kings 8: 16-18, 25-27.) The marginal reading for "daughter" of Omri, in verse 26, is *granddaughter*. This, of course, made Ahaziah a member of the house of Ahab, as well as a member of the house of David; and inasmuch as he was related to Ahab in this way, and followed in his footsteps, it was necessary that he suffer the consequences of wrongdoing. "And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, as did the house of Ahab; for he was son-in-law of the house of Ahab."

If one reads the account of the death of Ahaziah, in the chapter now before us, and then turns to 2 Chron. 22: 8, 9, and reads that, he may be somewhat confused with the apparent discrepancies, which he may observe. Hackett, in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, suggests that the two passages may be somewhat fragmentary, with the result that neither passage, when taken alone, gives the full picture. But when the facts of both passages are put together, the result is something like the following: Ahaziah, after escaping "by the way of the garden-house," was able for the time being to elude Jehu's men, and eventually reached Samaria, where he hid himself for a while. And "when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab," he sought for Ahaziah, and "they caught him," while he was hiding in Samaria; and when they brought him to Jehu, he commanded them to smite him in the chariot: and they smote him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. The stroke which was inflicted upon Ahaziah did not kill him then and there; he was able to flee to Megiddo, where he died.

### The Horrible Death of Jezebel

(2 Kings 9: 30-35)

*And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her eyes, and attired her head, and looked out at the window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy*



*master's murderer? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses; and he trod her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink; and he said, See now to this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.*

Although the reigning kings, who belonged to the house of Ahab, were dead, and very likely many others among the princes (cf. 2 Chron. 22: 8; 2 Kings 10: 1-28): there was, however, one spirit in that sinful house which had not yet been broken. The queen-mother Jezebel maintained her audacity to the very last. She probably felt that the supreme hour of her career was at hand; but not even the sudden and dreadful death of her son, or the nearness of her own fate, had any effect whatsoever on her steely heart. She painted her eyes, and attired her head, as if she were preparing for some state banquet; and then looked out of the window of her palace, and hailed the triumphant newly appointed king with the bitterest insults her wicked imagination could devise. She evidently knew that her father-in-law Omri, had more or less forced the usurper Zimri, who had smote his master Elah the king, to commit suicide, by burning the king's house over him, after a reign of only seven days (see 1 Kings 16: 8-18); and Jezebel's evident purpose in bringing up the case of Zimri, was to imply that the situation of Jehu was as precarious as that of her own.

The new king Jehu was probably stung by the implication contained in Jezebel's words; and he immediately demanded to know how those who were with the queen-mother stood with reference to him. It appears that only two or three eunuchs responded to the call of Jehu; and when he gave the command, as if to test their loyalty, they promptly hurled the wicked Jezebel from the window. It is doubtful if any queen-mother, in the annals of

time, ever died a more ignominious death than this wicked woman, who had done so much to defy Jehovah and to corrupt his people. One gathers from the record that Jehu hesitated only for a moment, while his horses trampled her body beneath their feet. He then went into the house to eat and to drink, it may have been, the very things which had been prepared for Jezebel herself.

But if that which has just been suggested is true, it appears that there was not a single servant of the royal household who uttered a wail, or thought of raising a finger in behalf of the queen-mother's family; notwithstanding the fact that they had been under the domination of Jezebel for some thirty-odd years. They may even have felt, as Solomon expressed the matter, "When the wicked perish, there is shouting." (Prov. 11: 10.)

And so, this wicked woman, about whom we are studying today, passed out of the picture in ignominy and disgrace but her memory still remains as a synonym of the worst kind of wickedness which continues to plague God's people. (Read Rev. 2: 2-23.) Even when Jehu, a short time later, gave orders that her body be buried, because she was a king's daughter, those who went out for that purpose discovered that the scavenger dogs had already eaten her body, with the sole exception of her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands.

### **No One Can Be Successful in Defying Jehovah**

(2 Kings 9: 36, 37)

*Wherefore they came back, and told him. And he said, This is the word of Jehovah, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel; and the body of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.*

It would be difficult to find a more impressive commentary on Paul's statements, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6: 23), and "for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6: 7), than that which is found in the context of the lesson text for today. The Inter-

preter's Bible notes that the narrative of the swift and terrible retribution which overtook the principals of the story, is given in vivid detail. The sordidness of the collapse of the house of Ahab was commensurate with its wickedness.

The important lesson for us in the whole tragic record, is that there runs through the affairs of men a moral law, to which all responsible beings are amenable. Behind the shifting scenes of outward events, including the rise and fall of dynasties and nations, the unvarying

principles of God's righteousness continues in full and complete operation. It does not matter how spectacular the achievements of men may be, or however great their ability or genius, if their works are tainted with evil, in whatever form it may take, they will, along with those who perform them, come to the ground at last. Modern history, in addition to the records of the Scriptures, has furnished us with the downfall of tyrants, whose miserable ends have not been unlike that of the house of Ahab.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Give some of the principal facts against which the lesson now before us is based.

When should people who are in the service of Christ conclude that their work in his service is over?

What great work lay before Elijah when he thought that he had nothing more to do?

In what way does God regard the nations of the world today? Give reasons for your answer.

Why does God continue to work with evil people and when does he cease such activity?

Upon what basic principle does the Lord deal with sinful humanity?

### The Golden Text

What is the nature of the statements which form the golden text for today's lesson?

In what way does the New Testament express the same idea?

What are some of the principal benefits which accrue to the righteous?

In what way does one of the writers of Proverbs show the difference between the good and the wicked?

### A New King Anointed and Commissioned

What was the status of the Kingdom of Israel at the time of this lesson?

Under what circumstances was Jehu

anointed to be the new ruler of that nation?

What caused the delay in destroying the house of Ahab?

In what way was Jehu especially fitted to accomplish God's will in this respect?

How was the matter of his anointing disclosed to the fellow soldiers of Jehu?

In what way did the new king begin his work of destroying the house of Ahab?

Why was the king of Judah included in the slaughter?

Where and under what circumstances was he slain?

### The Horrible Death of Jezebel

What attitude did the queen-mother display when Jehu came to her palace?

Why could she manifest such a spirit in the face of death and destruction?

In what way did Jehu respond to her outbursts?

In what way did Jezebel meet her death?

What lessons from her life are still with us today?

Why wasn't her body buried?

### No One Can Be Successful in Defying Jehovah

What particular benefit do we receive from the destruction of the house of Ahab?

Why are the wages of sin death?

Why do people always reap that which they sow?

What important principle runs throughout the story of the destruction of Ahab's house?

Why are all men subject to God's moral law?

Lesson X—March 8, 1970

DEATH OF FAITHFUL ELISHA

Lesson Text

2 Kings 13: 14-25

14 Now E-li'-sha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died: and Jo'-ash the king of Is'-ra-el came down unto him, and wept over him, and said, My father, my father, the chariots of Is'-ra-el and the horsemen thereof!

15 And E-li'-sha said unto him, Take bow and arrows; and he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Is'-ra-el, Put thy hand upon the tow; and he put his hand *upon it*. And E-li'-sha laid his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward; and he opened it. Then E-li'-sha said, Shoot; and he shot. And he said, Je-ho'-vah's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syr'-i-a; for thou shalt smite the Syr'-i-ans in A'-phek, till thou have consumed them.

18 And he said, Take the arrows; and he took them. And he said unto the king of Is'-ra-el, Smite upon the ground; and he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syr'-i-a till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou

shalt smite Syr'-i-a but thrice.

20 And E-li'-sha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Mo'-ab-ites invaded the land at the coming of the year.

21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of E-li'-sha: and as soon as the man touched the bones of E-li'-sha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

22 And Haz'-a-el king of Syr'-i-a oppressed Is'-ra-el all the days of Je-ho'-a-haz.

23 But Je-ho'-vah was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, I'-saac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

24 And Haz'-a-el king of Syr'-i-a died; and Ben-ha'-dad his son reigned in his stead.

25 And Je-ho'-ash the son of Je-ho'-a-haz took again out of the hand of Ben-ha'-dad the son of Haz'-a-el the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Je-ho'-a-haz his father by war. Three times did Jo'-ash smite him, and recovered the cities of Is'-ra-el.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints."* (Psalm 116: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 13: 1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

March 2.	M.....	Elisha's Defenders (2 Kings 6: 8-17)
March 3.	T.....	Death of Paul (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
March 4.	W.....	Death of Stephen (Acts 7: 54-60)
March 5.	T.....	Death of Abraham (Gen. 25: 1-8)
March 6.	F.....	Death of David (2 Kings 2: 1-10)
March 7.	S.....	Death Comes to All (Heb. 9: 27)
March 8.	S.....	Proper Goal in Life (Eccles. 12: 1-14)

TIME.—838 B.C.

PLACE.—Samaria.

PERSONS.—Elisha, Joash king of Israel, and others.

Introduction

The subject of last week's lesson, "Death of Wicked Jezebel," and the topic for today's lesson, "Death of Faithful Elisha," suggest one of the

greatest contrasts, which is possible in the experience of mankind. The births of these two people, no doubt, were the occasions of great rejoic-

ing, an the part of those who were close to them; but what a difference their deaths set forth! No human being is responsible for the circumstances of his birth, which signals his start in the race of life; but every normal human being is directly responsible for his status at the end of life's way. The beginning of one's life is completely free of any moral defilement whatsoever; but every responsible being will have to answer for the character which he takes out of this world.

Character, for all practical purposes, may be described as the deepest fact of human life, or, which is the same thing, the truth about the individual, which is written upon his personality. The Prussian poet Novalis calls character the "perfectly educated will"; and he also notes that the history of every individual man should be a Bible. We are all familiar with the statement which affirms that character is what a person really is, while his reputation is that which he is thought to be. Geikie says that our character is but the stamp upon our souls of the free choices of good and evil, which we have made through life. Character, then, as we are using the term in this study, is the sum total of the qualities which distinguish one individual from all other people.

### The Golden Text

*"Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints."* The passage just quoted is a part of a psalm which was devoted to thanksgiving for deliverance from death; and it is found in this context:

What shall I render unto Jehovah  
For all his benefits toward me?  
I will take the cup of salvation,  
And call upon the name of Jehovah.  
I will pay my vows unto Jehovah,  
Yea, in the presence of all his people.  
Precious in the sight of Jehovah  
Is the death of his saints.  
O Jehovah, truly I am thy servant:  
I am thy servant, the son of thy  
handmaid;  
Thou hast loosed my bonds.  
I will offer to thee the sacrifice of  
thanksgiving,  
And I will call upon the name of  
Jehovah.

The adjective "moral" is frequently used to indicate the nature of one's character. This is true because of the inherent ability of the individual to understand the difference between right and wrong. (Cf. Rom. 2: 14, 15.) This is also the reason why responsible people are called "free moral agents," that is, because of their ability to make their own choices in life. (Cf. Gen. 2; 15-17; 3: 1ff.)

The deaths of Jezebel and Elisha, one of ignominy and the other of glory, were not the result of accident. Each made their own choices in life; and they, in turn, resulted in the kind of people they were. We know that God does not want any one to be lost; but whether or not a person is to be with him in eternity, is a question which the individual will have to decide. In the words of John Oxenham,

To every man there openeth  
A Way, and Ways, and a Way,  
And the High Soul climbs the High  
Way,

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

I will pay my vows unto Jehovah,  
Yea, in the presence of all his people.

In the courts of Jehovah's house  
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.  
Praise ye Jehovah.

(Psalm 116: 12-19.)

Those who are acquainted with the teaching of the Bible, are aware of the fact that it was never God's intention that man should die; but when the creature permitted the evil one to alienate him from his Creator, the inevitable result was death. But Jehovah was not willing to leave the man, whom he had created in his own likeness, to the inevitable; for he immediately set about to redeem him from the seducer. (See Gen. 3: 15.) The struggle between right and wrong began then; but it was not until Jesus died for the sins of the world, that victory was assured for those who were

willing to accept the proffered salvation, and thereby become identified with the Redeemer. The risen and glorified Christ has the keys of death and Hades (Rev. 1: 17, 18); and there is therefore nothing for the child of God to fear from that charnel house. The apostle Paul, in fact, went far enough to say that "death is ours." (Read 1 Cor. 3: 21-23.)

But those who partake of the life of Christ, must also partake of his suffering, which sometimes results in physical death; but even then they have nothing to fear, for Jehovah places a high value on such sacrifices. (Cf. Acts 7: 57-60.) This is the idea which is suggested by the term "precious, being, as it is, a translation of the Hebrew *yaggar*,

which means, according to Brown, Driver, and Briggs (*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*), esteemed or highly valued. (Cf. Isa. 43: 4; Psalm 139; 17.) God wants every man to be saved, and has made it possible for that to be done; but inasmuch as Satan opposes every effort which is made in that direction, suffering is almost certain to be the lot of the righteous. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12; Luke 12: 4, 5.) But when death ends the earthly sojourn of the faithful child of God, from whatever cause, the net result is a life, safe in the keeping of the Redeemer; and that is described as a possession of great value in the sight of the Lord. And it is for that reason that the death of his saints are precious in his sight.

## The Text Explained

### Elisha's Fatal Illness and His Final Prophecy

(2 Kings 13: 14-19)

*Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died: and Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over him, and said, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! And Elisha said unto him, Take bows and arrows; and he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thy hand upon the bow; and he put his hand upon it. And Elisha laid his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, Open the window eastward; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot; and he shot. And he said, Jehovah's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou hast consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows; and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground; and he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times: then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it, whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.*

When Elisha stood on the east side of the Jordan River, and saw his master Elijah ascend to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by horses of fire, he exclaimed, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the

horsemen thereof!" But we should understand that Elisha saw more than the chariot of fire and the horses of fire; he evidently saw that the true prophet of God was the nation's most formidable defense and bulwark. The request which Elisha made on that occasion, at Elijah's solicitation, was indeed a hard one; but what was more important, Elisha had the capacity to receive it, as his after life and service demonstrated. Some one has observed that the holiness and consistency of his character and influence, were the result of his prayer and the desire which prompted it.

And so, when his master had gone to his heavenly reward, the younger prophet was left alone, as he prepared to return to his homeland to engage in the many years of prophetic work, in the service of Jehovah, as he dwelt in the midst of a rebellious and gainsaying people. But as Elisha made his way toward his place of activity, there came to him a new power for his work—a power which he had not before known. The hard thing for which he had asked had been granted, namely, the double portion or the birthright portion which was due the eldest son; and the sign or token of it was lying at his feet, that is, the mantle which had fallen from Elijah. The younger prophet stooped down, picked up the mantle, and made his way to the Jordan,

where he smote the waters and was able to cross the stream on dry ground, as he and Elijah had earlier done. This was a clear demonstration that Jehovah was with him, as he had been with his master; and it was easily recognized by the sons of the prophets, who were beholding from afar. It was in this manner that Elisha began his prophetic career, which lasted for more than fifty years, during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash, four of the kings of Israel.

Joash was the grandson of Jehu, and it was during his reign that Elisha was stricken with his fatal illness. We are not told why he visited the ailing prophet, but it was evidently because he recognized his greatness, even though he did not always choose to follow his instruction. The inspired historian says, concerning Joash, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; but he walked therein." (2 Kings 13: 11.) It frequently happens that people who endeavor to live apart from the Lord, both desire and covet the presence and grace of faithful ministers of the truth. Many of these people, as was the case of Joash, are able to see what such faithful servants of the Lord mean to them and to the country; and all of that will be taken into account by the Judge of all the earth in the last great day.

Whether or not Joash recognized and acknowledged, as Elisha had earlier done, that the prophet of Jehovah was the true and real defense of his country, it is a fact that he repeated the same words which Elisha addressed to Elijah, when the latter was being taken to heaven, namely, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" However, since Elisha apparently accepted the king's words as being a true representation of the fact that God's spokesman is indeed the protection of the country, it does not seem out of place to give that significance to the king's words. One has only to read the Bible, in order to see that many nations and cities have been protected by the words, prayers, and deeds of the prophets; and what was true in

Bible times, is also true now. The New Testament plainly says that God has determined the appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; which clearly implies that the time and place of their existence is according to God's will.

The king of Israel, in addition to having respect and reverence for Elisha, probably also wanted some information regarding the Syrians. At any rate, that is what the prophet gave him. Bows and arrows were among the principal weapons of warfare in those days; and it was by means of them that Elisha made known to the king what would happen with reference to the Syrians. It appears that the prophet only told the king to shoot one arrow, and that resulted in a favorable impression; but when Joash was told to smite the ground with the arrows, the king exercised his own judgment as to how many times he should do that. While there is no indication that a spiritual lesson was intended for us, it is well to remember that one of the fundamental principles of the Bible is suggested by the incident. One should always do that which he is told to do; and he should never be satisfied with stopping too soon.

### Elisha's Death and Last Miracle

(2 Kings 13: 20, 21)

*And Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.*

It has already been pointed out that the prophetic ministry of Elisha lasted for more than fifty years; but that does not mean that we have a written record of all those years. The fact is that the prophet dropped from sight, after instructing one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu as king (2 Kings 9: 1f); and the next time his name appears in the inspired history, the prophet was suffering his fatal illness. The combined reigns of Jehu and his son Jehoahaz numbered forty-five years, and we do not know how long Joash had been on the throne, when Elisha

died. And so, unless some of the miracles which are attributed to the prophet took place during the period just noted, then we have no record of his work for more than forty years.

The posthumous miracle, recorded in this section of the lesson text, is without parallel in the annals of history. The wonder - working power which the prophet exercised during his lifetime, continued on after his death. And while we are on the subject of miracles, it is well to note that the three greatest periods of miracle-working, so far as Bible history is concerned, came in connection with the work of Moses, Elisha, and Jesus; and each period was characterized by religious crisis and progress. The Moabites had evidently recovered from their great defeat at the hands of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3: 18-24); and at the time of this lesson they were making raids into the land of Israel. It appears that some of the local people were on their way to bury a dead body, when they saw the raiders approaching; and not having time to put the body into the intended burying place, they cast it into the cave where the bones of Elisha lay. No sooner had the man's body touched the remains of the great prophet, than it sprang to life. This must have made a profound impression upon the people in that area. This, as some one has suggested, is a token of our awareness that in death we have dealings with eternity.

Attention was directed in an earlier lesson to the over-all ministry of Elisha, but it does not appear out of place to mention some of the things said then, as we close our study of the life and work of this unusual prophet. His services to Israel were on such a high spiritual plane, and his ministries were so favorably known everywhere, that when he visited the capital of the Syrian nation, the king of that country, who was ill, sent to ask Elisha if he would recover from the sickness. The prophet assured the messenger that the king would recover, but also revealed the fact that the king would be murdered; and that by the very man whom Ben-hadad had sent to inquire of the prophet. Elisha then made it plain

to the messenger that he, after becoming king, would become a bitter enemy to Israel, and would cause untold suffering. (Read 2 Kings 8: 7-15.) It was Elijah who predicted the destruction of the house of Ahab, but it was Elisha who saw to it that the man who was to accomplish it was anointed king. (See 2 Kings 9: 1ff.)

C. Randall Barnes, in commenting on the character of Elisha, says, "Elisha presents a very striking contrast to his master, Elijah, who was a true Bedouin child of the desert. Elisha, on the other hand, was a civilized man, preferring the companionship of men, dwelling in cities, and often in close connection with kings. Elijah was a man whose mission was to accuse of sin or bring judgment upon men because of it. Elisha, while defending the ancient religion, comes as the healer, and so his miracles were those of restoring to life, increasing the widow's oil, making pure the bitter waters. There is tender sympathy for friends, tears for his country's prospective woes. And yet there is firmness in maintaining the right, sternness of judgment, and seeming forgetfulness of self. 'In spite of all the seductions to which he was abundantly exposed through the great consideration in which he was held he retained at every period of his life the true prophetic simplicity and purity and contempt for worldly wealth and advantages' (Ewald's *History of Israel*, IV, p. 83)."

Josephus says that Elisha was celebrated for righteousness, and was in eminent favor with God. "He also performed wonderful and surprising works by prophecy, and such as were gloriously preserved in memory by the Hebrews. He also obtained a magnificent funeral, such a one indeed as it was fit a person so beloved of God should have."

#### A Manifestation of God's Mercy

(2 Kings 13: 22-25)

*And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. But Jehovah was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he*

*them from his presence as yet. And Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash smite him, and recovered the cities of Israel.*

Those who are regular and diligent readers of the Bible are aware of the fact that indications of the patience of Jehovah with sinful people, are seen in practically every book of the entire Revelation. As has been pointed out so frequently, God does not want any one to be lost, and he is continuously, through his word, calling men to repentance. He is always willing to give any wandering child of God another chance, if he is willing to accept the gracious offer.

The entire history of the Israelites is one of oscillation between service to God, and the evil one. During the period of the lesson now before us, the Syrians were almost constantly harassing the Israelites, a thing which would not have happened, had the people of the Lord been faithful to him; but even at that, Jehovah continued to manifest his patience toward his people. Who does not recall the plaintive cry of divine love, as expressed by the prophet: "How shall I give thee

up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not turn to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come to wrath." (Hos. 11: 8, 9.)

There is no greater picture of this divine love, nor one which has greater appeal, than the Lord's story of the prodigal son. If people would read and consider that masterful appeal which the story contains, often, it would be easier for them to be more faithful to the Lord. Jehovah told the Israelites that he had loved them with an everlasting love (Jer. 31: 3), and we know that he feels the same way about his people today; for God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34, 35). In the words of George Matheson,

O Love, that wilt not let me go,  
I rest my weary soul in thee;  
I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depth its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

O Cross, that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee;  
I lay in dust life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms  
red  
Life that shall endless be.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In what way is today's lesson related to last week's study?

What benefit should we get from this contrast?

What is the basic meaning of character?

Why is every normal man responsible for his character?

Why did Jezebel and Elisha die such different deaths?

### The Golden Text

Against what background were the words of the golden text written?

Why is the death of the righteous precious in the sight of the Lord?

What is the meaning of the term "precious"?

### Elisha's Fatal Illness and His Final Prophecy

In what frame of mind was Elisha when Elijah left him alone in the prophetic field?

What meaning did the chariot and horses of fire have for him?

Under what circumstances did Elisha come to realize the divine power which was his?

In what way does the prophet appear before us in this lesson?

What was his final prophecy and in what manner did he make it known?

How did Joash apparently feel toward Elisha?

How do you account for the king's not following such a godly person?

What does the Bible teach with reference to God's relation to the nations of the earth?

What lesson is it possible for us to get from Joash's action on this occasion?

### Elisha's Death and Last Miracle

Approximately how long did the prophetic career of Elisha continue? Give reasons for your answer.

What portion of his ministry is covered by recorded history?

What was Elisha's last miracle?

What important lesson can we draw from this incident?

What were some of the outstanding things



which were accomplished during Eli-sha's ministry?  
Give a summary of the prophet's charac-ter.  
What impression must his death have made on the people of his day?

#### A Manifestation of God's Mercy

What does the Bible teach with reference to the patience of God toward his way-ward people?

Why is he so long suffering toward them?  
Discuss the over-all history of the people of Israel.  
In what way did Jehovah express his feeling toward his people?  
How is this same love expressed toward his people of this age of the world?  
How do we know that God has the same love for us?  
In what way is the love of God for his people described?

### Lesson XI—March 15, 1970

## WICKED KINGS OF ISRAEL

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 13: 1-3, 10, 11; 14: 23-27; 16: 2-4

1 In the three and twentieth year of Jo'-ash the son of A-ha-zi'-ah, king of Ju'-dah, Je-ho'-a-haz the son of Je'-hu began to reign over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* sev-  
enteen years.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah, and fol-lowed the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, wherewith he made Is'-ra-el to sin; he de-parted not therefrom.

3 And the anger of Je-ho'-vah was kindled against Is'-ra-el, and he de-livered them into the hand of Haz'-a-el king of Syr'-i-a, and into the hand of Ben-ha'-dad the son of Haz'-a-el continually.

10 In the thirty and seventh year of Jo'-ash king of Ju'-dah began Je-ho'-ash the son of Je'-ho'-a-haz to reign over Is'-ra-el in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* sixteen years.

11 And he did that which was evil in the sight of Je-ho'-vah; he de-parted not from all the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, where-with he made Is'-ra-el to sin; but he walked therein.

23 In the fifteenth year of Am-a-zi'-ah the son of Jo'-ash king of Ju'-dah Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Jo'-ash king of Is'-ra-el began to reign in Sa-ma'-ri-a, *and reigned* forty and  
years.

24 And he did that which was evil

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And they forsook their God.*” (2 Kings 17: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 15: 17-20.

in the sight of Je-ho'-vah; he de-parted not from all the sins of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Ne'-bat, where-with he made Is'-ra-el to sin.

25 He restored the border of Is'-ra-el from the entrance of Ha'-math unto the sea of the Ar'-a-bah, ac-cording to the word of Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-el, which he spake by his servant Jo'-nah the son of A-mit'-tai, the prophet, who was of Gath-he'-pher.

26 For Je-ho'-vah saw the afflic-tion of Is'-ra-el, that it was very bit-ter; for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Is'-ra-el.

27 And Je-ho'-vah said not that he would blot out the name of Is'-ra-el from under heaven; but he saved them by the hand of Jer-o-bo'-am the son of Jo'-ash.

2 Twenty years old was A'-haz when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Je-ru'-sa-lem: and he did not that which was right in the eyes of Je-ho'-vah his God, like David his father.

3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Is'-ra-el, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, accord-ing to the abominations of the na-tions, whom Je-ho'-vah cast out from the children of Is'-ra-el.

4 And he sacrificed and burnt in-cense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

*all the commandments of Jehovah*

### Daily Bible Readings

March 9. M..... Israel's Sin (Prov. 14: 21-35)  
March 10. T..... Remnant to be Saved (Isa. 4: 2-6)

March 11. W.....	... A Message of Reformation (Isa. 1: 10-20)
March 12. T.....	...Gone Astray (Jer. 50: 1-6)
March 13. F.....	Deception of Sin (Hos. 7: 1-10)
March 14. S.....	Wickedness in Israel (Hos. 1: 1-4)
March 15. S.....	"He Made Israel to Sin" (2 Kings 10: 29-31)

TIME.—856-742 B.C.

PLACES.—Samaria and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam, and Ahaz.

### Introduction

The Old Testament Scriptures clearly teach that it was God's will that he be recognized as the king of his people; but the people themselves were not satisfied to have it that way. The original kingdom of Israel continued for approximately one hundred and twenty years, and then was divided into two kingdoms—Israel, with ten tribes, known as the northern kingdom; and Judah, with two tribes, known as the southern kingdom. The kingdom of Israel continued for approximately two hundred and fifty years, and during that time there were nine different dynasties, in the strictest meaning of that term. For example, Zimri lasted for only seven days, and Shallum, one month; but each of those two men is listed as a king, with no family ties with the preceding or succeeding dynasties. We have already considered the better known, and probably the more talented among the nineteen kings of Israel; but the study of the northern kingdom as a whole would not be complete without a consideration of the ones about whom we are to study today.

Jehu was the tenth king of Israel, as well as the founder of the dynasty which bears his name; and it is interesting to note that his dynasty had more kings, than any other of the nine dynasties, as well as the longest in number of years. This prolongation in the reigns of those kings was expressly granted to the house of Jehu, as a reward for his zeal in destroying the house of Ahab. "And Jehovah said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the

throne of Israel." (2 Kings 10: 30.) But this is only a part of the inspired record, as may be seen by reading the verse before, and the verse after, the one just quoted. "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. . . . But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah, the God of Israel, with all his heart: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin." (2 Kings 10: 29, 31.)

Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, the great grandson of Jehu, and Jehovah caused him to utter the following words, when the prophet came to give a name to his firstborn son: "And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease." (Hos. 1: 4.) Jehu, like so many people today, had his opportunity to become a devoted servant of the Lord, for the accomplishment of his will; but he was not willing to have God direct all the avenues of his life. Another prophet spoke these words: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." (Ezek. 18: 24.) One unforgiven sin therefore can and will counteract an otherwise entire righteous life. (Cf. James 2: 10.)

### The Golden Text

*"And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God."*

The words just quoted are a part of that section of scripture, in which

the divine reason for bringing to an end the kingdom of Israel i- stated, namely, 2 Kings 17: 1-18. The immediate context of the golden text is as follows: "Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only." (2 Kings 17: 13-18.)

The departure of the people of Israel from the Lord's will rendered them so corrupt, that he could no longer tolerate them; and removed them away from his presence. These historical records are a part of our training (cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1

Cor. 10: 6, 11), and there is no question regarding their value to us. Human nature is substantially the same in all ages of the world, and what happened to Israel could very well happen to us. God's messengers are still calling to his people today; and unless we hear there will be no question regarding our fate. God's aim in dealing with his people, is to help them develop the kind of character, which can be with him for ever. But that can be done only as we take heed to walk in all of his ways. (Cf. Eccles. 12: 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.)

It has frequently been stated that man's moral character is his only real possession; and there is nothing else which he can, in strict truth, take with him when he leaves this life. His very being, with all of its manifestations, belongs to his Creator (cf. Ezek. 18: 4), as well as all of his material possessions (Luke 12: 15-20; 16: 1-12). Jehovah claims the right over man's existence upon the earth, and can terminate it whensoever it pleases him; but he allows man to have the rule over his own character. If it is bad, he holds him responsible for it; but if it is good, he permits him to have the praise for it. And not only is moral character man's only real possession in this life; it is the only earthly product which he can take with him out of this world. (Cf. Job 1: 21; Eccles. 5: 15; 1 Tim. 6: 7. David Thomas has pointed out that the primary element of a man's character, is his *controlling disposition*; and he further emphasizes the fact that this principle of character is like the sap of a tree—it runs into every branch of life, and produces, shapes, and colors every part. How true this was in the life of every single king of Israel! They all sinned, without a single exception.

### The Text Explained

#### Jehoahaz and Jehoash

(2 Kings 13: 1-3, 10, 11)

*In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son*

*of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the soil of Hazel, continually.*

Jehoahaz was the first of the four descendants of Jehu who reigned as kings of Israel, in keeping with Je-

hovah's promise in 2 Kings 10: 30, as we have already seen. Jehoahaz' conduct with reference to idolatry was in keeping with all the kings of Israel who ruled before him. Every single king of Israel who preceded Jehoahaz followed in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat; and it appears that with the single possible exception of Hoshea, the last king of Israel, that every king who followed Jehoahaz was also guilty of the same transgression.

The inspired historian tells us that it was because of the idolatrous practices of Jehoahaz, into which the people of Israel were evidently in sympathy, both in attitude and practice, that Jehovah became angry with Israel, and delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and also into the hand of his son and successor, Ben-hadad, continually. The marginal reading for "continually" is *all the day*; and something of the plight of Israel during that period, may be seen from the fact that the Syrians permitted Jehoahaz and his people to have only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; "for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing," or, as the margin has it, to *trample on*.

But when the king of Israel sought Jehovah, the Lord responded to his plea: "Now Jehoahaz besought Jehovah, and Jehovah hearkened unto him; for he saw the oppression of Israel, how that the king of Syria oppressed them. (And Jehovah gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hands of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as beforetime. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin, but walked therein; and there remained the Asherah also in Samaria.)" (2 Kings 13: 4-6.)

If it were not for the fact that we see this very same attitude manifested every day, it would indeed be difficult to understand why the children of Israel remained in their sins, when they could plainly see that they were the cause of all their suffering. But that has always been the story of the human race. Jehovah has demonstrated over and

over again that he is both willing and able to bless his people, and to protect them from the evil one; but still they walk in other ways, and reject the goodness which he offers them. There is perhaps no greater picture of this human trait, and God's attitude toward it, in all the Old Testament, than in Nehemiah's confession of the national sins of Israel. (See Neh. 9: 26-31.)

But the same picture, with even greater pathos, is seen in the New Testament. Jesus, in his lament over Jerusalem, gave voice to the same feeling of rejected love. It is not God's will that the great evils, which fall upon the world, should happen at all. Such thing always come as a climax to a long series of disobediences to God's laws. If Adam and Eve had been content to listen to and obey God, paradise never would have been lost; but even after men were compelled to live in a sinful world, Jehovah still manifested his willingness to bless them, if they would only listen to him. God's feelings toward sinful Israel were expressed by Hosea in the following words:

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. The more the prophets called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they know not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them. . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together." (Hos. 11: 1-4, 8.)

Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus has been repeatedly rejected, not only by Jerusalem and the Jews of his day, but in many instances by the very people whom he redeemed from sin by his own blood; it is a fact worthy of the most careful scrutiny, that he is still the same loving Saviour, and continues to plead with the disobedient to reciprocate his love. And too, his providential

goodness will not allow the sinful to relax in peace. "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3: 19, 20.)

Behold a stranger at the door!  
He gently knocks, has knocked before,  
Has waited long, is waiting still;  
You treat no other friend so ill.

O lovely attitude! He stands  
With melting heart and laden hands!

O matchless kindness! and he shows  
This matchless kindness to his foes.

Admit him, for the human breast  
Ne'er entertained so kind a guest;  
No mortal tongue their joys can tell  
With whom he condescends to dwell.

—Joseph Grigg.

*In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; but he walked therein.*

It appears that Jehoash, also called Joash, was as great a devotee to Jeroboam's form of calf-worship, as his father had been; but it seems that the son and his people fared much better with respect to the Syrians, than did the previous administration. The new king also appeared to be in much greater favor with Elisha the prophet, than some of his predecessors. (Cf. 2 Kings 3: 13, 14.) It was during the prophet's fatal illness that Joash (a contraction of Jehoash) called on him and wept over him, and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" It was pointed out in the previous lesson that these were the very words which Elisha had addressed to Elijah, as the latter was being taken to haven by miraculous means. It is very probable that the words of the prophet had become a

kind of saying or maxim among the people of Israel, which implied, as the king expressed it. "What shall we do now, seeing that thou art dying; because thou art our only defense!"

Elisha then gave his final prophecy, so far as the record goes, to Joash, by means of the bow and arrows, as we saw in last week's lesson. In the case of shooting an arrow out of the window, Joash was given specific instructions, and his obedience was commended; but with reference to smiting the ground with the arrows, he was not informed as to the number of times he should do that, and as it turned out, he quit too soon. It appears that he should have continued smiting the ground with the arrows, until the prophet told him to stop. The whole idea seems to have been something like this: It is essential that human effort must always be put forth in conjunction with divine counsel; or, to express the same thing in another way, If one does not intend to obey the Lord, there is no profit in acknowledging him and his word. This is a lesson which should be carefully emphasized and heeded. (Cf. 2 Kings 6: 8-13, and especially verse 10.)

Jeroboam II

(2 Kings 14: 23-27)

*In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which he spake by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. For Jehovah saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter; for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel. And Jehovah said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.*

The Jeroboam of this lesson was

the thirteenth ruler of the northern kingdom, and he is usually referred to as Jeroboam II, in order to distinguish him from the Jeroboam, who was the first king of Israel. Both of the Jeroboams were exceptionally able rulers, so far as accomplishments were concerned; but it appears that conditions were very favorable for the second Jeroboam to move forward toward great military achievements and prosperity. The reign of Jeroboam II was by far the longest, in terms of years, than any of the kings of Israel; and no other ruler of that kingdom was able to show the results which he left on record. The great Assyrian empire was at the height of its power, and the constant attacks which it made on Syria so weakened the latter, as to make Jeroboam's victories over it easier by comparison.

And inasmuch as the time and conditions, when Jeroboam II came to the throne, were auspicious, he was able to gain practically all the territory, which had previously belonged to the united kingdom, with the exception of Judah. These new conquests resulted in added revenues in tribute and trade, so that the reign of Jeroboam II was characterized by almost unparalleled prosperity and military glory. The inspired historian specifically says that the salvation which Israel enjoyed came from Jehovah, but there is no indication that Jeroboam or any of the Jewish leaders of his kingdom gave God any credit for his abundant blessings.

But, as is so often the case, the material blessings which Jeroboam II and his people enjoyed turned their hearts away from God; and it was not long therefore before moral corruption and spiritual decay set in, with the result that the people of that kingdom became guilty of almost every sin imaginable—drunkenness, immorality, social injustice, disregard for the poor, defrauding the helpless, and oppression in general—as may be seen by reading Amos and Hosea.

Both Amos and Hosea prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, and it is thought by many Bible students that, with the exception of Jonah, Amos was the earliest of the so-called "writing prophets," whose

works have come down to us. It is fair to assume, from the mention made of Jonah in 2 Kings 14: 25, that he was prophesying before the times of Amos and Hosea. Adam Clarke notes that Jonah "was the first of the prophets, after *Samuel*, whose writings are preserved." There is, however, no record of the prophecy, referred to in 2 Kings, other than what is said there; all that which is contained in the Book of Jonah relates to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire.

### Influence Extended to Judah

(2 Kings 16: 2-4)

*Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he did not that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.*

The situation in Israel would have been "worse than bad," if the sins of their kings and leaders could have been limited to their territory and people; but, as this section of the lesson text plainly implies, the New king of Judah, Ahaz, "walked in the way of the kings of Israel." The abominations which are ascribed to this ruler of the southern kingdom, were nothing short of horrible. People of our day can hardly imagine a father, who had some knowledge of Jehovah, offering his own children as burnt offering to a heathen deity. The father and predecessor of Ahaz, was Jotham, one of the better kings of Judah. The record says that he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, after the manner of Uzziah; "howbeit the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burned incense in the high places." (2 Kings 15: 32-38.)

This sad story has been repeated countless times throughout the ages. Fathers have lived good lives, after a sort, before their children; but have not really been dedicated servants of the Lord, in the true sense

of that word. It is hard enough to get children to do right, when a godly life is lived before them; but when they are confronted with even the slightest encouragement to imitate the ways of the world, the re-

sults are often disastrous. It is true that sometimes a righteous son follows a wicked or careless father; but that is the exception, rather than the rule. (Cf. Amon and Josiah, 2 Kings 21: 19ff.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What was Jehovah's original will regarding the government of his people?  
How did the people of Israel come to have a king and what was the history of the kingdom?  
Discuss the dynasty of Jehu to the time of this lesson?  
Why was the house of Jehu brought to an end?  
What happens to people when they turn away from their righteousness, even in one point?

### The Golden Text

In what context were the words of the golden text spoken?  
Why were the kings of Israel so universally wicked?  
Of what value are the records of the Old Testament to us? Give reason for your answer.  
What is Jehovah's over-all aim in dealing with his people?  
In what way is man related to his own character and why is this true?

### Jehoahaz and Jehoash

Who were the two kings referred to in this section of the lesson text?  
What does the Bible reveal regarding all the kings of Israel?  
What punishment did Jehovah inflict upon Jehoahaz and the people for their sins?  
What was the condition of the kingdom of Israel during this period?  
What response did Jehovah make when Jehoahaz besought him?  
In what way did the people of Israel, under the leadership of Jehoahaz, react to God's mercy?

What lesson should we learn from all of this?  
How do we know that these divine-human relationships have continued through the ages?  
How do you account for people's so continuously rejecting the love and mercy of God?  
In what way did Jehoash differ from his father?  
What prediction did Elisha make regarding him and his people?  
What lesson should we learn from Jehoash's response to Elisha's instruction to him?

### Jeroboam II

Who was the Jeroboam of this lesson and how is he distinguished from the first king of Israel?  
Tell something of the character and reign of Jeroboam II.  
How did the king and his people feel toward God, as it respects their prosperity and military glory?  
Why does material prosperity so often adversely affect the Lord's people?  
From what sources do we learn of the sinful conditions during Jeroboam's reign?  
What is the value of the writing of the prophets to us?

### Influence Extended to Judah

Why does the wickedness of others so often affect those who are around them?  
What were some of the practices which characterized the reign of Ahaz?  
Why could a man who knew something about God do such horrible things?  
What kind of parental example did Ahaz have to follow?  
What great lesson should fathers and mothers learn from these experiences?

## Lesson XII—March 22, 1970

## ISRAEL'S CAPTIVITY

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 17: 3-6; 18: 9-12

3 Against him came up Shalmane'ser king of As-syr'-i-a; and Hó-she'-a became his servant, and brought him tribute.

4 And the king of As-syr'-i-a found conspiracy in Hó-she'-a; for he had sent messengers to So king of E'-gypt, and offered no tribute to the king of As-syr'-i-a, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of As-syr'-

i-a shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of As-syr'-i-a came up throughout all the land, and went up to Sa-ma'-ri-a, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hó-she'-a the king of As-syr'-i-a took Sa-ma'-ri-a, and carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and placed them in Ha'-

lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes.

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the seventh year of Hó-she'-a son of E'-lah king of Is'-ra-el, that Shal-ma-ne'-ser king of As-syr'-i-a came up against Sa-ma'-ri-a, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of

Hez-e-ki'-ah, which was the ninth year of Hó-she'-a king of Is'-ra-el, Sa-ma'-ri-a was taken.

11 And the king of As-syr'-i-a carried Is'-ra-el away unto As-syr'-i-a, and put them in Ha'-lah, and on the Ha'-bor, the river of Go'-zan, and in the cities of the Medes,

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of Je-ho'-vah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Mó-ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The face of the Lord is upon them that do evil."* (1 Pet. 3: 12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 19: 23-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

March 16.	M.....	Jehovah Pleads for Righteousness (Amos 5: 10-17)
March 17.	T.....	Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge (Hos. 4: 6-10)
March 18.	W.....	Blessed Knowledge (Hos. 6: 1-6)
March 19.	T.....	Assyrian Exile (2 Kings 17: 6-12)
March 20.	F.....	Evil Conditions (Micah 1: 1-16)
March 21.	S.....	Corrupt Worship (2 Kings 17: 30-36)
March 22.	S.....	Wicked Conduct (Amos 6: 1-5)

TIME.—725-721 B.C.

PLACES.—Samaria and the several places of captivity.

PERSONS.—Hoshea, Shalmaneser, and their respective peoples.

### Introduction

As we near the close of our study of the history of the northern kingdom of God's people, it will be beneficial to us to take an overall review of the entire period. Bible history is a profitable study; and any one who engages in it will have a profitable background for future study of the Scriptures. The united kingdom began in 1095 B.C., and continued to 975 B.C., or about one hundred and twenty years. When the original kingdom was divided, the ten tribes which revolted became the northern kingdom, while Judah, along with Benjamin, became the southern kingdom. These two rival kingdoms continued together for approximately two hundred and fifty years, before the kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) was taken into captivity; and after that, the kingdom of Judah, or southern kingdom, continued for another one hundred and thirty-four years, when it too went into captivity.

The two rival kingdoms of God's people each had nineteen kings,

during their separate histories, but with this significant difference: All the kings of Judah were of the family of David, and the succession was generally from father to son. After the death of Ahaziah who, along with Jehoram king of Israel, was slain by Jehu, his mother, Athaliah the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, murdered all the seed royal, except Joash, who was stolen away, and usurped the throne herself for some six or seven years, when she herself was slain. But her pre-emptory reign is not usually counted, when the kings of Judah are listed. However, when we come to examine the history of the northern kingdom, the situation is far different from that of the kingdom of Judah. There were nine different house or dynasties to occupy the throne of Israel, if we count the reigns of Zimri, who committed suicide after a reign of one week—the Bible says that he "reigned seven days in Tirzah—and Shallum, who was slain after occupying the throne for one month. And so, with the same number of



kings, Judah was able to extend the reign of her kings for one hundred and thirty-four years longer, than was Israel. Or, to state the same thing in another way, the first twelve kings of Judah—Rehoboam to Hezekiah—continued several years longer, than all the nineteen kings of Israel.

But looking at another phase of the question, and apparently more significant, as we compare and contrast the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, it is easy to see that the moral superiority of Judah is equally striking, not only in the preservation of the true worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem, while Israel sank into and continued in gross idolatry, but also, although of less importance, in the personal character of their kings. It is true that the house of David was deeply corrupted, especially in its relationship with the wicked house of Ahab; but there were several good kings, such

as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. But when we turn to the kingdom of Israel, it is wholly impossible to find a single king, out of the entire nineteen, who was free from the blot of foul wickedness. The best one of these kings, apparently, was the last one. The inspired historian says of him, that is, of Hoshea, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him." (2 Kings 17: 2.) Every single one of the others was guilty of the sin for which Jeroboam I was destroyed. (1 Kings 12: 25-33; 13: 33, 34.) Both the northern and the southern kingdoms, as we have already noted, ended in captivity; though not at the same time; but Judah was allowed to return to the homeland. Israel, as a kingdom, was not permitted to return; but the people were permitted to go with those of Judah. (Read Ezek. 37: 15-22.)

### The Golden Text

*"The face of the Lord is upon them that do evil."* These words are found in a passage, which Peter quoted from Psalm 34: 12-16. Peter's entire statement is contained in verses 10-12, while the passage in Psalms reads as follows:

What man is he that desireth life,  
And loveth many days, that he may  
see good?

Keep thy tongue from evil,  
And thy lips from speaking guile.  
Depart from evil, and do good;  
Seek peace, and pursue it.

The eyes of Jehovah are toward the  
righteous,

And his ears are open unto their  
cry.

The face of Jehovah is against them  
that do evil,

To cut off the remembrance of them  
from the earth.

There are many ways in which the Lord manifests his attitude toward his people, both the good and the bad; and Peter, in the passage which he quotes from David and adapts to his purpose in hand, shows how the principle works. At times he looks with favor upon the righteous; but how different it is, when his countenance or expression indicates that he is displeased with those who are before him. Several

visions of the end of time were vouchsafed to John, on the isle of Patmos; and in one of them he saw that "the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6: 15-17.)

People may think lightly of the face of the Lord now, but as the passage just quoted indicates, there is coming a time when their attitude will be changed completely. The face of the Lord, for example, is seen in the gathering glooms of death. A man may have been hardened in sin as he walked through life, crying, Where is the Lord? in impious defiance or presumptuous scorn; but let death come upon him, and the face of God is clearly seen. The whole scroll of life unrolls before him; and every thought, passion, incident, and experience, stands out with startling vividness. There is neither mist nor confusion; and he

fully realizes that he is before God, and that without remedy; and he no longer has any desire to delude himself. (Cf. Luke 16: 19-31.) The face of God flashes out over his entire life, as the soul passes on to meet the realities of its destiny. In

the words of another, the "vain show" vanishes, and the elusion is forever ended. Death places a man forever, and consciously, before the face of God, with no possible chance of the victim's ever forgetting the impression which it made upon him.

## The Text Explained

### A Foretaste of National Destruction

(2 Kings 17: 3, 4)

*Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.*

The two preceding verses of the chapter, from which this section of the lesson text is taken, will enable one to see who is the antecedent of "him," in the expression "Against him." Bible students are aware of the fact that Jehovah frequently used wicked nations to punish his sinful people. Isaiah, in prophesying against the wicked rulers of Judah, a few years after the downfall of Israel, spoke of the Assyrian king as the instrument of Jehovah's wrath, in these words: "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation!

I will send him against a profound nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut down nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes all of them kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols." (Isa. 10: 5-11.)

The passage just read is an impressive example of the manner in which Jehovah uses the wrath of

man to praise him. (See Psalm 76: 10; cf. Ex. 9: 15, 16; Rom. 9: 17.) The Assyrian king had no idea that he was serving Jehovah, to say nothing of intending to please him; but he was, for all that, used to accomplish the divine will. This example also shows something of the way in which the providential workings of God are brought about, namely, the accomplishment of his will through natural means. Habakkuk, nearly thirty years after the fall of Israel, was unable to see the consistency in using a wicked nation to punish another people who were less wicked; and he reverently asked Jehovah to explain the matter to him. The Lord granted the prophets' request, and assured him that the sending of a wicked nation against another people (in this instance the Chaldeans against Judah) was in order to accomplish a divine purpose. The scourge of the aggressor nation was only a temporary measure, and that nation itself would later be overthrown and severely punished, or, completely destroyed.

The first mention of an Assyrian king in the Scriptures is in 2 Kings 15: 19, 20, which reads as follows: "There came against the land Pul the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land."

The "Pul" of the passage just cited is the same person as Tiglath-pileser, in the opinion of many eminent Bible students; and it has been suggested that "Pul" was Tiglath-pileser's personal name. (Cf. 1 Chron. 5: 25, 26; 2 Kings 15: 29.) When Pekah and Rezin, kings of Is-

rael and Syria, respectively, went up to fight against Jerusalem, Ahaz, who was then king of Judah, panicked and called on Tiglath-pileser for help, notwithstanding the fact that Isaiah assured the king of Judah of divine aid. "Then said Jehovah unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, . . . and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, . . . thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken to pieces, so that it shall not be a people. . . ."

"Then saith Jehovah unto me, . . . the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria." (Read Isa. 7: 1-8; 8: 1-4.) Tiglath-pileser was succeeded on the throne of Assyria by Shalmaneser, known in history as Shalmaneser V. It was this latter king who came up against the king of Israel, "and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him tribute." Something happened which led Hoshea to think that he could throw off the heavy yoke, which Shalmaneser had placed upon him; and the king of Israel, accordingly, tried to form an alliance with So the king of Egypt. This attempt failed, however, and the Assyrian king shut Hoshea up, and bound him in prison. There is no further word as to what became of the king of Israel, after the fall of Samaria. He appears to have continued as king in name, up to and including the capture of the city. It has already been pointed out that Hoshea was the last king of the northern kingdom.

### **The Siege of Samaria and the Captivity of Israel**

(2 Kings 17: 5, 6; 18: 9-11)

*Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

*And it came to pass in the fourth*

*year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria carried Israel away unto Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

It is thought by many students of the Bible, and of secular history, that Sargon (cf. Isa. 20: 1) came to the throne of Assyria in 722 B. C.; and that it was he who actually took Israel into captivity. Harper's Bible Dictionary says that the palace of Sargon, which was unearthed at Dur-Sharrukin by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, contains the names of thousands of the leading citizens of Israel, which were inscribed there; and that these, along with the treasures which were found there, offer a vivid commentary on 2 Kings 17.

It appears from 2 Kings 15: 29 that the carrying away of the people of Israel from their homeland, was at least the second such deportation; and it is possible, in the light of 2 Kings 23: 15-20, that the final "carrying away," which broke Israel as a people (cf. Isa. 7: 8) did not come, according to Isaiah's prediction of sixty-five years, until Esarhaddon king of Assyria completed the task, at the time he removed some from Judah. (See Ezra 4: 2; 2 Kings 17: 24; 2 Chron. 33: 10, 11.)

Smith's History of the Bible says, "Esarhaddon is the only Assyrian monarch whom we find to have actually reigned at Babylon, where he built himself a palace, bricks from which have been recently recovered bearing his name. This fact accounts for Manasseh being taken to Babylon, and not to Nineveh. To that city he carried Manasseh captive on a charge of rebellion; and it would seem that Jerusalem was taken at the same time. The date of this event is placed by a Jewish tradition at the twenty-second year of Manasseh (677 B. C.), which agrees very well with the account of the new colonization of the country of Samaria by settlers whom Esar-

haddon (or Asnapper) sent from *Babylon* and other places." This, of course, was not the final destruction of Jerusalem; for, following his repentance in Babylon, Manasseh was returned to his kingdom in Jerusalem. (See 2 Chron. 33: 12, 13.)

The practice of moving a captive people from their homeland, was in keeping with the heartless cruelty of the Assyrians. Other conquerors might deal severely with their victims; but, as J. H. Morrison observes, to fall into the clutches of the Assyrian king, was to endure all that devilish lust and cruelty could devise. He tore the people from their homes and countries, and mixed them together indiscriminately; so that all patriotism might be quenched. When the land of Samaria had been depopulated, people from other regions were brought in to occupy the former home of the Israelites. (See 2 Kings 17: 24-41.)

It is supposed that the poorest of the Israelites were left in their homeland, as was done in the case of Judah (2 Kings 24: 14; 25: 12; Jer. 40: 7; 52: 16); and that they intermarried with the foreigners who were brought in, with the result that the people who were later known as the *Samaritans* came into being. Josephus, however, vigorously denies this, and says that the people who were brought into the country were "then called *Samaritans*, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed." (See page 313; cf. pages 298, 345.)

Smith's Bible Dictionary more or less confirms the view of Josephus, as the following quotation indicates: "We may then conclude that the cities of Samaria were not merely partially, but wholly evacuated of their inhabitants in B. C. 721, and that they remained in this desolated state until, in the words of 2 Kings 17: 24, 'the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava (Ivah, 2 Kings 18: 34), and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.' Thus the new Samaritans—for such we must now call them—were Assyrians by birth or subju-

gation, were utterly strangers in the cities of Samaria, and were exclusively the inhabitants of those cities." (Vol. IV, p. 2799f.)

### The Divine Reason for the Captivity

(2 Kings 18: 12)

*Because they obeyed not the voice of Jehovah their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.*

No better commentary on this section of the lesson text can be found, than that which the sacred historian recorded in 2 Kings 17: 7-18, which reads as follows: "And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; and they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them. Ye shall not do this thing. Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the na-

tions that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all of the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only." (Read also verses 19-23.)

Some of the prophets who warned Israel of their sins against Jehovah, were Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, but their preaching had little effect upon the people; for they were joined to their idols. (Cf. Hos. 4: 17.) This should be a powerful lesson to us; for Israel was not the only nation which fell, because of its sins. (Cf. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and

others.) Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, lists the following five reasons for the fall of that mighty nation: (1) "An alarming increase in divorce and the breaking up of the Roman home." (2) "Higher and higher taxes, until the load became unbearable, while the officials of the empire continued to spend public funds with reckless indifference." (3) "A mad desire for excitement which led to all sorts of moral extravagances, which finally engulfed the empire and destroyed it." (4) "Increased political pressure for armaments, but with blind disregard for destructive elements building up inside the empire." (5) "A decline in religion and a withholding of support for character-building institutions."

How do the situations just described compare with condition in our country today? It may indeed be later than we think. The Bible tells us that God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts 17: 26; cf. 10: 34, 35.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Give a brief resume of the history of the kingdom of Israel.

Compare and contrast the kingdom of Israel with that of Judah.

What was the probable reason why the southern kingdom outlasted the northern kingdom?

What do we know regarding the return of both kingdoms from their captivity?

### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What are some of the ways in which Jehovah has manifested himself toward the people of the earth?

What does it mean for the face of the Lord to be against one?

When will people come to a full realization regarding the question now before us?

How may any one know for certain that he will have the approval of the Lord at the last day?

### A Foretaste of National Destruction

Against whom did the king of Assyria come up in this lesson?

In what way has Jehovah used wicked nations to punish his sinful people?

How do such aggressor nations usually

feel about that which they are doing, as it respects Jehovah?

What important lesson should we learn from this?

Who was the first Assyrian king to come up against the Lord's people?

What did the prophet Isaiah say regarding the outcome of the Assyrian invasion?

Who was the king who dealt specifically with the king of Israel, Hoshea?

### The Siege of Samaria and the Captivity of Israel

Who, apparently, was the Assyrian king who actually removed the Israelites from their home?

What information is available regarding this question?

Why were captive people removed from their homeland to another country?

What effect would such treatment have upon them?

What was the general character of the kings of Assyria?

What usually happened to the cities and countries of the displaced Israelites?

Why do some people feel that the Samaritans were from a mixed breed of Israelites and foreign people who were brought into their country?

What are the probable facts regarding this subject? Give reasons for your answer.

### The Divine Reason for the Captivity

What reason do the Scriptures give for the captivity of the Israelites?

How do you account for people who were related to the Lord acting as those people did?

Discuss some of the sins which they committed in their homeland.

Who were some of the prophets who warned them of their waywardness?

Why were the people so indifferent to the pleadings and warnings of the prophets?

What has been the fate of other nations who tried to live without God?

What reasons were assigned for the decline and fall of the Roman empire?

What lesson should we get from this?

## Lesson XIII—March 29, 1970

### ISRAEL'S MANY WARNINGS

#### Lesson Text

Amos 4: 4-13

4 Come to Beth'-el, and transgress; to Gil'-gal, *and* multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes every three days;

5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them; for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Is'-ra-el, saith the Lord Je-ho'-vah.

6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

7 And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your

gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of E'-gypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

11 I have overthrown *cities* among you, as when God overthrew Sod'-om and Go-mor'-rah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Je-ho'-vah.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Is'-ra-el; *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Is'-ra-el.

13 For, lo, he t h a t formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth—Je-ho'-vah, the God of hosts, is his name.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."* (Prov. 29: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Amos 6: 1-6.

#### Daily Bible Readings

March 23. M.....	Hosea's Warning (Hos. 4: 1-9)
March 24. T.....	Amos' Warning (Amos 6: 1-5)
March 25. W.....	Jehovah's Warning (Isa. 37: 14-36)
March 26. T.....	Contempt for God (Isa. 36: 13-20)
March 27. F.....	Rebellion in Israel (2 Kings 7: 13-18)
March 28. S.....	Hosea's Prayer (Hos. 14: 1-9)
March 29. S.....	Blessings of Faithfulness (Isa. 55: 6-13)

TIME.—760 B.C.

PLACE.—Bethel.

PERSONS.—Amos and the people to whom he spoke.

## Introduction

Amos was one of the minor prophets, and with the possible exception of Jonah, he appears to have been the oldest of the group, that is, his ministry began before any of the others, with the possible exception of Jonah. One has only to read the book which bears his name, in order to see that he was indeed a spokesman for God. His home was in Tekoa, about six miles south of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah; but it appears that his preaching was done in Bethel, in the northern kingdom, where he aroused the ire of the priest of that city. "Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house." (Amos 7: 10-13; cf. 1 Kings 12: 25-33; 23: 15-20.)

The faithful proclamation of the word of the Lord has always aroused opposition on the part of those who are unwilling to accept the Lord's way of life. The same situation which prevailed in Amos' day, is still with us; and there is every indication to justify the assumption that it will continue, as long as the gospel is preached. Amos replied to Amaziah in the following words: "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees: and Jehovah took me from following the

flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land." (Amos 7: 14-17; cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

When Amos uttered his prophesy against Israel, the nation was at the height of its national prosperity. Military victories and abundant wealth were regarded as convincing proof, that they were enjoying a unique degree of Jehovah's approval. Lavish gifts and elaborate ritual at the national sanctuary, satisfied the national conscience; and furnished the basis for the prevailing optimism which they enjoyed. This false sense of security so blinded the eyes of the leaders, as to cause them to fail to observe the significance of the approach of the invincible Assyrian armies. And notwithstanding the fact that Amos plainly told them of their coming doom, the social evils which he so soundly denounced had actually increased, when Hosea began his prophetic ministry, some ten years after Amos began his. Both public and private honor were lost, and immorality was openly practiced, and was unrebuked. The nation had lost faith in both God and itself; and had begun to seek support in foreign alliances. But notwithstanding all this, Jehovah was not willing to give up his people, without further efforts to save them. (Cf. Hos. 11: 8ff.)

## The Golden Text

*"He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."* The term "reprov'd" is used here in the sense of attempted correction, for some wrong. There are people who "miss the mark" for various reasons; but regardless of the reason for the sin, whether

through ignorance or by deliberate choice, a change for the better must be made, before the Lord will forgive. When people sin through ignorance, they do not at the time realize that they have done wrong; and it often happens that when people sin deliberately, they do not seriously consider the fact that they

have gone against the will of the Lord: and so, in either case, the attention of the sinner must be gained before he is willing and ready to do something about his errors. The Lord is not willing for any person to be lost, and he has, accordingly, charged those who are faithful to him with the responsibility of warning people of their transgressions, regardless of the reason for their sins.

We saw in the lesson last week something of the efforts of God to bring his wayward people to repentance, along with their refusal to listen to his pleadings. After describing in detail the sins of the people, the inspired historian added, "Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God." (2 Kings 17: 13, 14.) Both the motive of God and the reaction of the people are set forth in these words: "And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion

on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy." (2 Chron. 36: 15, 16.)

The Old Testament Scriptures have been preserved for our example and edification (Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11), but unless we profit from them, we will not be benefited by them. Sin is sin, whether committed during previous dispensations, or during the age in which we now live; and unless we turn away from everything which displeases the Lord, we cannot rightfully hope to live with him forever. Many people know that they have sinned; but there are others who think that they are right, but who are mistaken in that which they think the Bible teaches. This is enough to show that any person ought to condition himself to the point, that he will listen carefully to any word of caution or warning which may come to him; and if he will make this the rule of his life, it is doubtful if he will ever get very far from the pathway of righteousness. It is the duty of any child of God to warn others of their mistakes, which he sees and knows about; but it is also his duty to be willing to heed the warnings of those who may be aware of his mistakes. (Cf. Heb. 10: 24.)

## The Text Explained

### Sins of the Sanctuaries

(Amos 4: 4, 5)

*Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgressions; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.*

Israel, through much of her history, was plagued with idolatry; but it is obvious, from the section of the lesson text now before us, that the complaint against the people was not idolatry, but rather a corruption of the worship which Jehovah had ordained for them. The whole tone of the prophet was that of sarcasm

—"for this pleaseth you." The situation is described by George Adam Smith in these words: "The series opens with a scornful call to worship, which the prophet, letting out his whole heart at the beginning, shows to be equivalent to sin. Note next the caricature of their exaggerated zeal: sacrifices every morning instead of once a year, tithes every three days instead of every three years. To offer leavened bread was a departure from the older fashion of unleavened. To publish their liberality was like the later Pharisees, who were not dissimilarly mocked by our Lord: *When thou doest alms, cause not a trumpet to be sounded before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.*"



The irony of the statement, as The Wycliffe Bible Commentary notes, is intended to show that the more frequently the Israelites visited their shrines, the father they were from God. Amos was simply describing their normal procedure, on the occasion of a pilgrimage to their places of national worship.

Jehovah is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and he has always required that those who worship him be righteous themselves, and that they maintain, without corruption, the worship which he has ordained for his people. Or, to express the same thing in another way, those who draw near to God must do so in righteousness, and they who worship him must endeavor to follow his instruction. Jehovah has never permitted, with his approval, his people to follow their own selfish ways, and then attempt to worship him in accordance with their own wishes. Jesus says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4: 24.) The apostle Paul, in writing to the Colossians regarding worship, other than that which was divinely ordained, said, "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col. 2: 23.)

Thayer calls "will-worship" (*ethelo-thrēskeia*) "worship which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to the contents and nature of the faith which ought to be directed to Christ; said of the misdirected zeal and practices of ascetics: Col. 2: 23." When God ordains worship for his people, he does not permit them to make any changes in that which he prescribes: this is true in this age of the world; and it has always been true. The nature and content of the worship of the Jews was different from that for the Lord's people today; but there is no difference between the two systems, so far as the spirit and attitude of the worshippers are concerned. Jehovah has never permitted those who profess to worship him to change his will concerning them.

When the people of Amos' time engaged in unrighteous conduct, and sought to change the Lord's direction for their worship, the prophet

pled, "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." But as long as Israel continued to disobey God, the prophet thundered, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos 5: 14-27.)

Amos was not the only prophet who cried out against the sins of the Lord's people. His contemporary Hosea joined him in the great effort to turn the Lord's people back to him again. "Because Ephraim hath multiplied altars for sinning, altars have been unto him for sinning. I wrote for him the ten thousand things of my law; but they are counted as a strange thing." (Hos. 8: 11, 12.) Neither the law of Jehovah, nor the preaching of the prophets had any effect for the better on the wayward people. A little later on, Micah said, "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6: 6-8.)

### Indifference Toward Chastisement

(Amos 4: 6-11)

*And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. And I also have withholden the rain from you, when*

*there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and, the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have overthrown cities among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet ye have not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.*

No thoughtful person can read the section of the lesson text just quoted, without reaching the conclusion that Jehovah meant to impress upon his apostate people, that he is indeed the Lord of the life-giving powers, which manifest themselves in nature and in history; and that it is in accordance with his will that the forces which make for death and destruction are visited upon his sinful people. These truths are not only proclaimed by the prophet Amos; they are set forth in many parts of the Scriptures. (Cf. Lev. 26: 3-5, 14-16, 19, 20; Deut. 28: 15-24; Mal. 3: 7-12.)

George Adam Smith, in commenting on this portion of the lesson text, says, "In the ancient world the settled belief was that natural calamities like these were the effects of the deity's wrath. When Israel suffers from them the prophets take for granted that they are for the people's punishment. I have elsewhere shown that the climate of Palestine lent itself to these convictions; in this respect the Book of Deuteronomy contrasts it with the climate of Egypt. And although some have rightly scoffed at the exaggerated form of the belief, that

God is angry with the sons of men every time drought or floods happen, yet the instinct is sound which in all ages has led religious people to feel that such things are inflicted for moral purposes. In the economy of the universe there may be physical ends served by such disasters, apart from their meaning to man. But man at least learns from them that nature does not exist solely for feeding, clothing, and keeping him wealthy; nor is it anything else than his monotheism, his faith in God as the Lord both of his moral life and of nature, which moves him to believe, as Hebrew prophets taught and as our early English seer heard Reason herself preach. Amos had the more need to explain those disasters as the work of the God of righteousness, that his contemporaries, while willing to grant Yahweh leadership in war, were tempted to attribute to the Canaanite gods of the land all power over the seasons." (Cf. Nah. 1: 3-6.)

Even the strongest of men know how helpless they are in the path of a hurricane, a tornado, a paralyzing snow-storm, the onrushing waters of a mighty river at flood-stage, a prolonged drought, and many other conditions which nature imposes upon the human race; and the people who are subjected to the phenomena just mentioned, are also made to realize, if they will only stop to think, how great is the power which makes such things possible. Not only has the Lord demonstrated time and time again, that his mighty powers, which are manifested in nature, are used to warn and to punish his people here upon the earth; they are likewise used to warn people of his coming power which will be manifested at the last day, and in the punishment of the wicked in eternity. (Cf. Rev. 6: 12-17; 8: 5.)

Dr. Smith goes on to say that the matter which immediately concerns us, in the passage now under consideration, is its effective contrast between the manner in which men treat God, and his treatment of them. Men lavish on Jehovah gifts and sacrifice, while he gives them cleanness of teeth, or, which is the same thing, hunger, drought, blasting of their fruits, pestilence, war, earthquakes, et cetera. This is to say that men regard God as a being

to be flattered and fed, while he regards them as creatures with characters to be disciplined, even to the point of denying them the things which are needful for their material welfare. Whatever views such men have of God which are religious, are sensuous and gross; while he views his austere treatment of them, as being both moral and ennobling. All of this may be grim, but the thoughtful will have to admit that it is grand; and as one considers the efforts of Amos, he begins to perceive in him something of the greatness of an Isaiah, even in spite of his petty estimation of himself. (Cf. Amos 7: 14ff.)

And so, "have not those, who have believed as Amos believed, ever been the strong spirits of our race, making the very disasters which crushed them to the earth the tokens that God has great views about them? Laugh not at the simple peoples, who have their days of humiliation and their fast-days after floods and stunted harvests. For they take these, not like other men, as signs of their frailty and helplessness; but as measures of the greatness God sees in them. His provocation of their souls to the infinite possibilities which he has prepared for them." (The *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. I, p. 164f.)

### A Meeting with God

(Amos 4: 12, 13)

*Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth—Jehovah, the God of hosts, is his name.*

After declaring to Israel that Jehovah rules both in the forces of nature and the events of history, the prophet Amos again reminds the people of Israel that inasmuch as Jehovah will continue to manifest himself unto them in these things, there is only one thing for them to do, namely, "prepare to meet thy God." This is not a call to prepare themselves to endure the punishment which he will inflict; it is,

rather, a stirring call to repentance. Verse 13 contains one of the outstanding descriptions of the greatness of God, to be found anywhere in the Bible.

It is not within our finite ability to conceive of the greatness of God, but we can both believe and declare that which the Bible says about his attributes. This is, in fact, what the Scriptures say will be done. "And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatness." (Psalm 145: 6.) It is assumed here that the Bible is the inspired word of God to man; and with this divine testimony before us, we can know something of that which Jehovah says about himself. His character is revealed in the Sacred Writings, and we are also told that he has made himself known by means of the material creation. (See Psalm 19: 1-6; Rom. 1: 20.) The works of nature, which have been referred to as God's *Other Book*, declare that there is a God, for they could not exist apart from such a being; but the Bible alone tells us *who* God is, and gives us such information about him, as he wants us to have.

The threefold character of God, as revealed in the Bible, is that of Creator, Lawgiver, and Redeemer; and in each of these three manifestations we are able to behold some of his attributes, namely, (1) as *Creator*, wisdom, power, goodness; (2) as *Lawgiver*, justice, truth, and holiness; and (3) as *Redeemer*, mercy, condescension, and love. It should also be observed that in each and all of the attributes just listed, Jehovah is infinite, immutable, and eternal. Other characteristics of God, which are revealed in the Bible, are (1) he is a Spirit (John 4: 24); (2) he is omniscient (Acts 15: 18; Rom. 16: 27); (3) he is omnipotent (Gen. 17: 1; Rev. 4: 8); (4) he is omnipresent (1 Kings 8: 27; Psalm 139: 7-10; Jer. 23: 23, 24; Acts 17: 27, 28); (5) he is abundant in loving kindness (Ex. 34: 5-7); (6) he will not justify the wicked (Ex. 23: 7; Heb. 2: 1-3); (7) he is no respecter of persons (Acts 10: 34, 35); (8) he looks to, that is, regards with favor, the poor and contrite (Isa. 66: 2); (9) he uses wicked men to destroy his enemies and punish the unfaithful (Isa. 10: 5-7;

2 Sam. 7: 14; Jer. 51: 20ff). The passages just cited make it abundantly clear that Jehovah is not dependent upon man's willingness to obey him, in accomplishing his purposes here upon the earth.

Amos made it clear to the people of Israel that Jehovah was punish-

ing, and would continue to punish them, so long as they continued to disobey him; and if we are willing to get the lesson, so far as we are concerned, the punishment will be extended through all eternity to those who die in their sins. May God help us to profit by this lesson!

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Give some facts regarding the prophet

Amos and the time of his ministry.

Where did he prophesy and what opposition did he encounter?

What always happens when the word of God is faithfully proclaimed?

What reply did Amos make to Amaziah?

What was the moral and spiritual condition of Israel when Amos spoke against them?

What lesson should we learn from all of this?

### The Golden Text

In what sense is the term "reproved" used in the text now before us?

Why is reproof so often essential?

Who is responsible for the work of re-proving?

Why does Jehovah continue his work of trying to correct the wayward?

What lesson should we learn from this?

What should every child of God always be willing to do?

### Sins of the Sanctuaries

What specific sins did Amos condemn in Israel?

What was the nature of the language which he used against them?

What is often accomplished by sarcastic speech, such as that employed by Amos?

What has Jehovah always required on the part of those who worship him?

How may one go about engaging in "will-worship"?

In what way did the Lord regard the worship of sinful Israel?

Who joined with Amos in denouncing unacceptable worship on the part of Israel?

How do we know that God will not accept such worship from any one today?

### Indifference toward Chastisement

Why does Jehovah often chastise his people?

In what form did his chastisement of Israel take and what did he endeavor to get them to see?

What does Jehovah want all of his people to learn regarding the forces of nature?

Why are people today so slow in learning this lesson?

Give some examples of the manner in which God's power is manifested today?

What lesson, in addition to one ones for this life, should we learn from these displays of divine power and majesty?

What is the principal lesson we should learn from Amos' preaching to sinful Israel?

What difference is seen in people's treatment of God and his treatment of them?

### A Meeting with God

Under what circumstances did Amos tell Israel to prepare to meet God?

What did he mean by that statement?

What further lesson do we learn from verse 13?

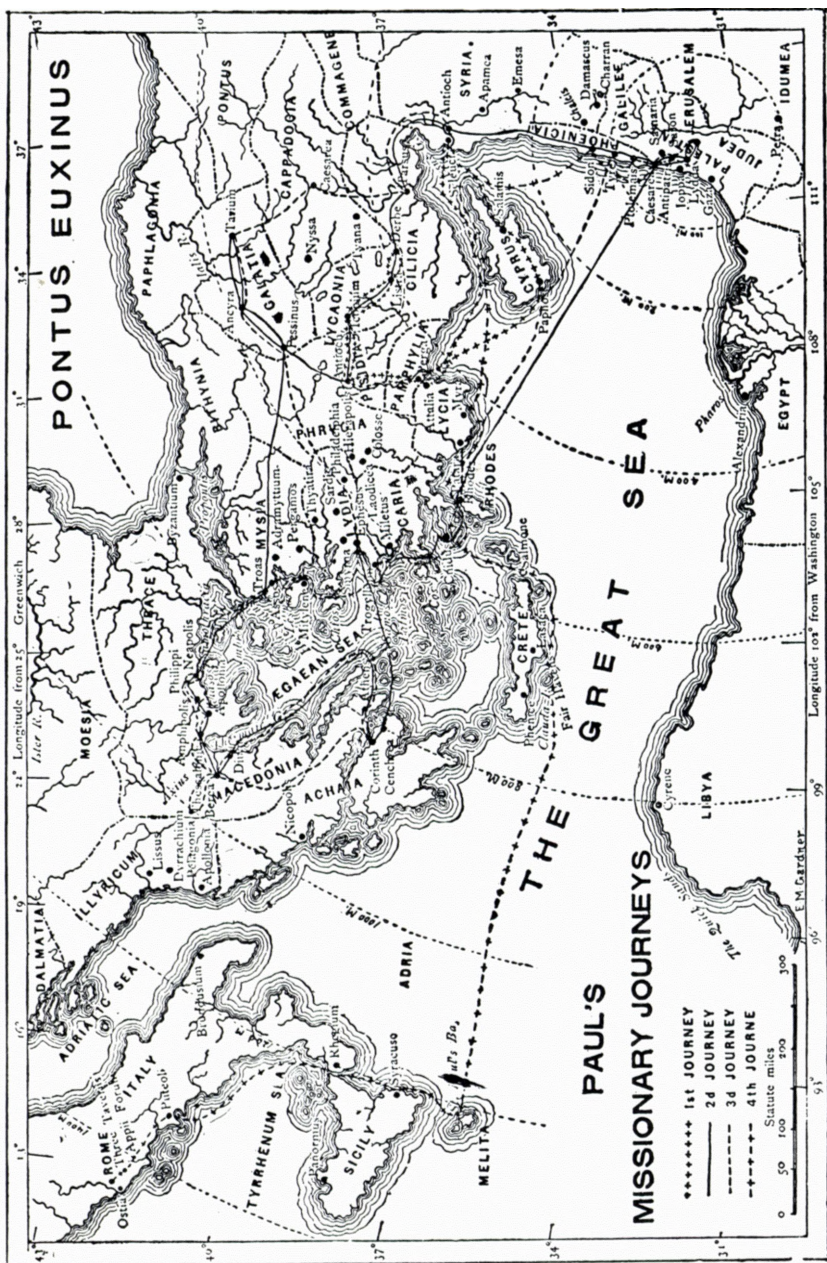
In what way should we try to visualize the greatness of Jehovah?

How is his greatness made known to us?

Give some of the principal manifestations of his greatness.

What impression should all of this make on us?

In what way can we best be benefited by the lesson which we have studied today?



## SECOND QUARTER

### STUDIES IN THE EPISTLES OF COLOSSIANS AND FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS

*AIM.—To study carefully and in detail Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to the Thessalonians; to learn well the wonderful lessons of life which they contain; and to imbibe the faith and fidelity of him who penned them so that we may better imitate him as he imitated Christ.*

Lesson I—April 5, 1970

### PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS

#### Lesson Text

Col. 1: 1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus through the will of God, and Tim'-o-thy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *that are* at Co-los'-sae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, praying always for you,

4 Having heard of your faith in Christ Je'-sus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints,

5 Because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,

6 Which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as *it doth* in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth;

7 Even as ye learned of Ep'-a-phras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf,

8 Who also declared unto us your love in the spirit.

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 To walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy;

12 Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;

13 Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love;

14 In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."* (Col. 4: 5.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Col. 4: 10-17.

#### Daily Bible Readings

March	30.	M.....	Christ, Creator of All (Eph. 3: 8-13)
March	31.	T.....	Christ Exalted (Col. 1: 15-23)
April	1.	W.....	Foundation Laid By Christ (Heb. 1: 8-14)
April	2.	T.....	Paul, Minister of Christ (Col. 1: 24-29)
April	3.	F.....	Christ Over All (Eph. 1: 15-22)
April	4.	S.....	"Let Us Make Man" (Gen. 1: 26-31)
April	5.	S.....	Paul's Desire for Colosse (Col. 2: 1-6)

**TIME.**—Colossians was written in A.D. 62.

**PLACE.**—The epistle was written in Rome.

**PERSONS.**—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

Those who arranged the books of the New Testament gave little or no attention to the order of their writing, or their contents and relation to each other. They apparently did with the books of the New Testament, pretty much as Farrar says regarding the arrangement of the twelve minor prophets; they simply placed the longest and most difficult epistle first. Paul wrote most of the epistles of the New Testament; and if they had been arranged in the order in which he wrote them, and in their relation to each other, it would be much easier for us to see and understand the drift of his thought, and get the lessons which he sought to convey. All of the letters of the New Testament were addressed to individuals or congregations, and were concerned with issues which were pertinent then; and, as any one who studies them can readily perceive, they are still relevant and doubtless will be to the Lord's people, in all ages to come.

A brief consideration of the order in which Paul wrote his epistles, along with his apparent purpose, in the case of some of them, is probably not out of place just here. The first of these letters are 1 and 2 Thessalonians, followed by the Corinthian epistles, and Galatians and Romans, in that order. These letters were all written before Paul's first Roman imprisonment. During the time of his incarceration, Paul wrote Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians, probably in that order. During the four or five years between his first and second Roman imprisonments, he apparently wrote 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy, in that order.

It was probably when Paul arrived in Corinth, on his third missionary journey, that the news of a crisis 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 excited both the astonishment and the indignation of the

apostle; and we may be sure that he wrote his letter to the Galatians almost immediately, which 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 subject 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; Romans, on the other hand, partakes more of the nature of a treatise. Galatians and Romans should be read together, and in the order here given.

A similar situation formed the background for writing Colossians and Ephesians; and these two epistles sustain a relationship to each other, pretty much like that which characterizes Galatians and Romans. Colossians was written in response to reports concerning the so-called *Colossian Heresy*, which apparently was the initial phase of that subtle philosophy which, in later years, came to be known as Gnosticism. This system was not merely a fantastic theory, or a frivolous speculation; it was a serious effort to solve an ancient and an abiding problem, that of the origin of evil. But notwithstanding that motive, it was a pernicious heresy; and, if it had been permitted to prevail, the truth of the gospel would have perished. The immediate purpose of the letter to the Colossians was to deal with the heresy just mentioned; but other congregations in that area needed information on that subject too. And so, Paul wrote a broader treatise, one which would enable his readers to refute the heresy, if it had already reached them, or to deal with it effectively, if and when it did get to 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 letter which we know as Ephesians probably went to several congregations in that area; and it should be read and studied *after* considering Colossians.

## The Golden Text

*"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."* Not only do the Lord's peo-

ple have a definite obligation toward him and each other; they also are responsible for their manner of liv-

ing before the outside world. Christian people are usually in the minority. It is in this kind of a situation that the unconscious, as well as the conscious, attitudes and habitual practices assume the greatest significance. The Lord's people can exalt or degrade the Christian life, in the estimation of the world; and they can often win or repel those who are potential converts to the Lord. Paul's admonition here is a practical application of the Lord's teaching regarding the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. (See Matt. 5: 13-16.)

If we read the full statement of Paul's exhortation to the Colossian Christians, we can see the three directives which he gives to Christians, to aid them in their efforts at commending the way of Christ to others, that is, to those who are not in fellowship with him. "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." The passage just quoted is rendered by Moffatt in these words: "Let Christian wisdom rule your behav-

iour to the outside world; make the very most of your time; let your talk always have a saving salt of grace about it, and learn how to answer any question put to you."

The three things which Paul wants Christian people to put into practice are, (1) redeem the time, or, as the margin has it, *buying up the opportunity*. Not only should the Lord's people not waste their time; they should be alive to every opportunity for service in his vineyard, and in the wider fields of evangelism among the lost. (2) Always try to say something which will have a wholesome effect upon those who may be listening. It is unfortunate that some professed Christians prefer to season their speech with pepper, rather than with salt. (3) Learn how to say the right thing, at the right time, and to the right person. "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." (1 Pet. 3: 15.) *This is what it means to walk in wisdom toward them that are without.*

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(Col. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.*

It was often essential for Paul to assert his apostleship, or, his apostolic authority, when writing the letters, which he sent to congregations and to individuals; and this was especially true, when a problem arose. The epistle to the Colossians must be considered in the light of the heresy, to which reference has already been made. The apostle therefore makes it plain that his place and position in the divine economy was due to the will of God, and whatever he said therefore would have divine approval. He was joined by his son in the gospel, Timothy, in the salutation. It is evident, of course, that the younger man had nothing to do with the contents of the letter itself.

It is interesting to note that Paul adds the term "faithful" to his description of the people to whom he was writing. That was, in all probability, no mere desire to add another word. Paul frequently used the term "saints" when writing to brethren who were in error, both with reference to doctrine and practice (cf. the salutations in the Corinthian letters); but in the case of the Colossians, he not only referred to them as saints, which means the ones who had been set apart unto the Lord, but also added, "and faithful brethren." There must have been some reason for this addition, and the answer is probably found in the fact that they were in the midst of a heresy, and he did not want it to appear that he was approving every individual there, unless they were faithful to the Lord. It is true that he called the Corinthians "saints," but he also told them in plain terms what was wrong with them. Lightfoot, in



commenting on the passage now before us, says,

"This unusual addition is full of meaning. Some members of the Colossian church were shaken in their allegiance, even if they had not fallen from it. The apostle therefore wishes to be understood that, when he speaks of the saints, he means the true and steadfast members of the brotherhood. In this way he obliquely hints at the defection. Thus, the words 'and faithful brethren' are a supplementary explanation of 'to the saints.' He does not directly exclude any, but he indirectly warns all. The epithet 'faithful' cannot mean simply 'believing'; for then it would add nothing which is not already contained in 'saints' and 'brethren.' Its passive sense, 'trustworthy, steadfast, unswerving' must be prominent here."

The city of Colossae was located on the southern bank of the Lycus river (see map), near the place where it flows into the famous Meander. The city was also on the great highway between Ephesus and the Euphrates valley, the highway which connected eastern and western Asia. Colossae was about one hundred miles east of Ephesus, in the province of Asia; and it was one of a group of three cities in the Lycus valley of ancient Phrygia, namely, Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, all of which are mentioned in the letter from which the lesson text is taken. These three cities were only a few miles from each other, and Colossae was both the oldest and the smallest of the three.

### Thanksgiving for the Faith and Love of the Colossian Brethren

(Col. 1: 3-8)

*We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have toward all the saints, because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you; even as it is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth in you also, since the day ye heard and knew the grace of God in truth;*

*even as ye learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.*

It is not definitely known when, or by whom, the church in Colossae was established; but from Col. 1: 6, 7 and 4: 12, 13, one would naturally infer that Epaphras took the lead in planting the church in that city. The expression "on our behalf" (Col. 1: 7) seems to imply that Paul directed the work of Epaphras in Colossae; and it is quite possible that the latter established the church there, during Paul's long stay in Ephesus. (See Acts 19: 1-10.) There is no indication that Paul himself ever visited the city of Colossae; but it is quite obvious that he maintained a vital connection with the church in that city (cf. Col. 2: 1), and he seems to have kept himself informed regarding conditions within the congregation (Col. 1: 3, 4; 2: 5).

The immediate occasion for writing the epistle to the Colossians, was the report which Paul received from Epaphras regarding the conditions in the church in their city. (See Col. 1: 7, 8; 4: 12, 13.) This report was both favorable and unfavorable. The unfavorable part had to do with certain false teaching, which was being done there, and which was greatly hindering the progress of the church. But, judging from that which is said in the epistle itself, it is reasonable to conclude that, generally speaking, the Colossian brethren had remained true to the doctrine, which they had been taught by Epaphras. (Cf. Col. 1: 4; 2: 5.) But it was evidently clear to Paul that the danger of their being led into error, was sufficiently serious to call forth the letter which he wrote to them.

We have no direct knowledge of the false teaching, which was being done in the church in Colossae; we can only infer as to its nature, from that which is said in Paul's letter to them, and from what is historically known regarding the general conditions in that area, during those times. It appears that Phrygia was well suited for the teaching and development of error. According to **Bishop Lightfoot**, "*Cosmological speculation, mystic theosophy, reli-*

gious fanaticism, all had their home there." It seems that the false teachers, involved in the present situation, did not regard themselves as being enemies of Christianity; but only felt that they were enriching and enlarging its teaching. They accepted the truth of Christianity, but tried to add to it some deeper knowledge, to which they claimed to have access. The theory which they held, as already indicated, is now called *The Colossian Heresy*.

We are a long way from the time and place of the lesson now before us; but we are not too far away to repeat, in principle at least, the mistake which the false teachers in Colossae made. Most any preacher or teacher in the church today will readily admit that he believes that which the Scriptures teach; but it will have to be admitted that there are some who are wont to give a somewhat "deeper meaning," which the average student is not able to see or to "dig out." Any one, of course, is justified, and should be encouraged in his efforts, in bringing to the service every shade of truth which the Bible contains; but no one has the right to go beyond that. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4: 6; 2 John 9.) Both Paul and Peter made it abundantly clear that the Scriptures, as we have them, are sufficient for all things which we need to know and believe, and practice; and Jude says that we should "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Read 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4; Jude 3.)

It is the will of God that all of his people be one; and it was for that reason that Paul was always thanking God for that kind of a situation among brethren, and continuously praying that it might continue. The brethren in Colossae had been brought into that kind of fellowship by the gospel, which had been preached to them. Paul calls it "the word of the truth of the gospel," which is parallel to a statement in Eph. 1: 13, 14 which says, "In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession,

unto the praise of his glory." When the Lord's people are conscious of such blessings in Christ, they have a powerful motive to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4: 3.)

Paul notes that this gospel truth "is also in all the world bearing fruit and increasing, as it doth also in you," which tells something of the grand sweep of the gospel message. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him." (John 3: 16, 17.) Jesus prayed that his followers might be one, "that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17: 20, 21.) Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." (See 2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) And Jesus, on the day he left his disciples to return to the Father, charged them to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16: 15.)

The Interpreter's Bible calls attention to the fact that a well known commentator characterizes Paul's claim that the gospel was bearing fruit and growing in all parts of the world as a wild exaggeration, because the church was relatively small in the vast Roman empire; and then calls attention to the fact that at the time of this lesson, centers of Christian teaching and influence were already established in every major quarter of Roman civilization. Paul had already written to the Romans that he had himself covered the territory "from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum"; and that he had "no more any place in these regions" to preach. (See Rom. 15: 19-23.) The Interpreter's Bible further notes that "Christian claims had been staked out in every major quarter of Roman civilization, and the lordship of Christ over all mankind was already a settled principle of the church's teaching."

### **Paul's Prayer for Their Progress and Perfection**

(Col. 1: 9-14)

*For this cause we also, since the*

*day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.*

It is interesting to observe that this entire section of the lesson text, along with the next four verses of the chapter, from which it is taken, is expressed in a single sentence. Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul, are aware of the fact that he frequently employed exceptionally long sentences. Prayer was a daily practice with the great apostle to the Gentiles, as may be seen by reading the various letters which he sent to the brethren. The term "pray" is the general word for prayer, while to "make request" indicates the fact that he made definite petitions for them. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 1-4.) The several items referred to in the section of the lesson text now before us, indicates the wide scope of the apostle's prayer for the Colossian saints.

The Speaker's Bible points out that one should, first of all, look upon prayer as being primarily a

means of communication with the Lord. But this implies thought; for our letters to our friends are not confined to our needs. Indeed, we are frequently ashamed to mention them, lest we leave the impression that we are writing for selfish purposes. We feel that our friendship, or rather our sense of the value to us of our friend's friendship, is endangered by many requests. We like for him to feel that we care for him, for what he is; and not for what he gives. And it must not be otherwise with our prayers to God. It is true that we are told to make known our requests to him (cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7); but that generous care for our needs must not be abused. (Cf. Eph. 3: 14-19.)

Hendriksen points out that verses 13 and 14 summarize the divine work of redemption. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.) Jesus authorized the gospel to be preached; man then must respond to the will of the Lord (cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9); and then God will forgive past sins, and provide whatever man needs to live a life which is acceptable to the Lord. The devil usurped the rule of this world, but when Jesus got ready to begin his mediatorial reign, his kingdom was established; and all who desire to be identified with him, are translated into the kingdom, or added to the church. (Cf. Acts 2: 47; Matt. 16: 18, 19.)

It is interesting to note that Paul, when he came to discuss the great blessings which believers have in Christ, identified himself with them: they are blessings which all Christians share together.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What possible reason can you suggest for the present arrangement of Paul's epistles in the New Testament?

Discuss the probable order in which Paul wrote them and their relationship to each other.

Under what circumstance did Paul write the letter to the Colossian brethren?

What other letter has a very close relationship with Colossians?

The Golden Text

Why are Christian people required to walk in wisdom toward them that are without?

What does such a walk imply?

What three directives did Paul set before the Colossian Christians?

What does it mean for one to redeem the time?

The Salutation

Why did Paul so often assert his apostleship when writing to others?

Why was it essential in the case now before us?

Why, apparently, did the apostle add the word "faithful" when referring to the Colossians?

What is the New Testament meaning of the term "saint"?

Where was the city of Colossae located and what other cities were in the same province?

Thanksgiving for the Faith and Love of  
the Colossian Brethren

Who probably established the church in Colossae and at about what time?

Is there any indication that Paul was ever in that immediate vicinity? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the immediate occasion for Paul's writing to those brethren?

What was the nature of the report concerning the Colossian church which Paul received?

What false teaching was probably being taught in the church there?

How, apparently, had the brethren, generally speaking, reacted to it?

What practical lesson should we learn from the Colossian situation?

Just how far are the teachers of the Scriptures permitted to go?

Why would any one want to go any further?

What is God's will regarding the unity of his people and how is that brought about?

What progress was the truth making at the time Paul wrote to the Colossians?

What evidence do we have regarding that progress?

Paul's Prayer for Their Progress and  
Perfection

In what way did Paul indicate his genuine interest in the Colossian brethren?

What was his daily practice with reference to prayer?

What meaning should prayer have to the Lord's people now?

What do many people apparently think prayer is primarily?

What do we learn from the closing verses of our lesson for today?

In what way did Paul identify himself with the Colossian brethren?

## Lesson II—April 12, 1970

### THE PERSON OF CHRIST

#### Lesson Text

Col. 1: 15-29

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation;

16 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;

17 And he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

19 For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;

20 And through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

21 And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works,

22 Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him:

23 If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church;

25 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward. to fulfil the word of God,

26 *Even* the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints,

27 To whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ;

29 Whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."* (Col. 2: 2, 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Eph. 1: 19-23.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 6.	M.....	Christ, the Foundation (1 Cor. 3: 10-15)
April 7.	T.....	Christ, Builder of the Church (Matt. 16: 13-20)
April 8.	W.....	Christ, Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2: 13-22)
April 9.	T.....	Church, Christ's Body (Eph. 1: 15-23)
April 10.	F.....	Christ, the Head of His Church (Col. 1: 12-20)
April 11.	S.....	One Body, One Church (Eph. 4: 4-6; Eph. 1: 19-23)
April 12.	S.....	Christ, The Beginning (Rev. 3: 14-18)

TIME.—Colossians was written in A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

Jesus is the most universally admired character in history. His movements on the stage of human actions are with such grace and poise, that all who behold him are filled with wonder and approbation. No one can look at him for long, without asking great questions about him. Where did he come from? How did he obtain his grace and beauty of character? How are we to account for the potency of his personality? If the record of his life and works should be removed from the annals of time, then the best we have in those things which we treasure most, would be no longer ours. Jesus Christ lives in poetry, in art, and in the hearts of those who believe in him, and accept him as their Saviour and Lord. The teaching and influence of Jesus are found, wherever civilization has gone.

There are, in reality, only two views concerning Jesus. One view maintains that he was a great and good man, but only a man; while the other view holds that he is God's Son, as no other person is or can be. The first view cannot be true; for if he is not what he claimed to be, then he is neither great nor good. The second view is the correct one; and it is certain that no other person who ever lived upon the earth, signifies more than Jesus does. Many people love him, others hate him; but their love, or hate, is with fervor. Although it has been more than nineteen hundred years since Jesus left the earth he is not a dead issue; men must still reckon with him. We may read of the conquests of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, or other great men, and feel no personal concern; but not so with Jesus. He grips our attention, chal-

lenges our allegiance, and demands that we take a stand, either for or against him. (Cf. Matt. 12: 30.)

The most authentic record of Jesus is found upon the pages of the Holy Scriptures, and especially the gospel narratives. It is true that the records were penned by men; but they were inspired men. It would have been utterly impossible for the writers of the life and teaching of Jesus to invent the character which they describe, without divine help; for "no dramatist, whatever he may attempt, can draw taller men than himself." And that Jesus is greater than the men who portrayed his character, is a fact which is self-evident, and does not therefore have to be proved. It would have been impossible for mere human beings to have invented Jesus, and that which he said and did; for both he and his reactions to living situations about him, were without precedent in all history. But as it is, we have before us, in the records of the Bible, the most original and wonderful accomplishments the world has ever seen. The New Testament writers were able to picture Jesus as the Son of God, *without lowering God to the level of men*. This has never been done by any other writer, who ever tried to describe a god! Furthermore, the manner in which the writers of the New Testament accomplished their task of portraying the character of Jesus, is most remarkable. They pictured a character, hitherto without being among men—the greatest character the world has ever known—without offering a single word of praise for him. They wrote their records in the simplest form; and, although conceived as the Son of God, Jesus

is pictured as the most natural character which ever appeared in human

flesh. (Cf. John 1: 1-3, 14; 1 Tim. 3: 16; Heb. 10: 5.)

### The Golden Text

*"Even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."* The full context of the words just quoted reads as follows: "For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech. For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." (Col. 2: 1-5.)

The passage just quoted, and especially the words of the golden text, should be read in the light of Col. 1: 24-29. If we should consider the words of the golden text abstractly, that is, without considering them in the light of Paul's use of the expression, in its total context, we might say that the meaning is substantially the same as that found in Eph. 1: 3, where the apostle says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." "Every spiritual blessing" certainly includes "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; and both passages tell us that they are all in Christ. But Paul's evident purpose in referring to the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge,"

was to indicate the true source of their blessings, namely, hidden in Christ, instead of being in the select few of the so-called philosophers. *"This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech."*

The doctrine which is contained in the Epistle to the Colossians, is the gospel restated in contrast with the philosophy of the Colossian heresy; and in presenting the truths contained in this letter, Paul set forth the grandest and fullest conception of the person and work of Christ, which is known to us. Using the vocabulary of the heretics, Paul told the Colossian brethren that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." With reference to circumcision, he declared that in Christ they "were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands." In speaking of the attractive symbols of the "mystery religions," he explained that in baptism they were buried with Christ, and raised with him through faith. He told them that the observance of a feast day, a new moon, or a sabbath day, was only a shadow of Christian truth. The perfect "mystery" is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And in Christ "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden"; and in him all things and all peoples find completion and unity. The Greek had his "philosophy," and the Jew his "circumcision"; but in Christ "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all."

### The Text Explained

#### The Preeminence of Christ with Reference to All Creation

(Col. 1: 15-17)

*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.*

Attention was called, in the previous lesson, to the fact that the Colossian heresy was the initial phase of that subtle philosophy which, in later years, came to be known as Gnosticism. (The Book of 1 John deals at length with the fullgrown system.) Just how widely the heresy differed from Christianity appears in its very name. It was the doctrine of *gnosis*, the Greek word

for "knowledge"; and its advocates distinguished themselves from the simple multitude, who only had "faith," by assuming the designation of "Gnostics." Thus, since the system claimed for the select few the possession of a superior acquaintance with the truth, it tended toward the exclusive and the aristocratic.

The Gnostics denied the direct creation of the world by God himself; because, in their estimation, that would require that God be the creator of evil. Creation, according to their theory, was made possible through a series of emanations from God, each successive emanation being less divine, until the point was reached where contact with matter, which they regarded as being essentially evil, became possible. These emanations were called aeons, spirits, or angels; and they were worshipped with an affectation of humility, in approaching the lower grades of deity, instead of venturing into the immediate presence of God himself. Vincent suggests that the form of error, which prevailed in Colossae, included three elements, namely, (1) Jewish formalism; (2) speculative mysticism, representing the germs of that which later developed into Gnosticism; and (3) Essenism, the medium through which the Jewish and Gnostic elements came into combination.

Growing out of the idea that the bodies of people are evil matter, and could not therefore have been created by God, three extreme errors arose, namely, (1) That only by various ascetic practices, by which the body is punished, could people hope to save their bodies (Col. 2: 20-23). (2) That since the body is essentially evil, and its deeds are not to be accounted for, license therefore should be granted for evil conduct, so that sinful passions were indulged in at pleasure, and with impunity (Col. 3: 5-10). (3) Since matter was essentially evil, there could have been no true incarnation. Christ therefore, as they viewed the matter, was not God manifested in the flesh (Col. 1: 19-22). As one reads the epistle from which these lessons are taken, he is impressed that Paul warned his readers against the following errors: (1) a self-styled philosophy or *gnosis* (2:

4, 8); (2) Jewish ritualism (2: 11, 14, 16, 17); (3) angel worship (2: 18); and (4) ascetic practices (2: 20-23).

All of these false theories conspired to limit the greatness and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the redemption which was wrought through him. The effort was being made to lead the Colossian Christians into the idea that, in seeking mystic communion, that is, the "fulness" of religious experience, or the sense of being filled with divine power, was to be found in communion, not merely with Christ, but with other heavenly powers as great as, perhaps greater, than he. The poison of this heresy lay in its dualism; and it struck at the very foundation of the faith of the gospel of Christ. Thus, instead of the incarnation—God manifested in the flesh—there was merely an aeon or angelic intermediary. This pernicious doctrine held that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the son of Joseph and Mary—hence, a man like other men; but who in time became wiser and more righteous than others.

It was further alleged that at his baptism, Christ descended into Jesus, coming as he did from God; and that following that event, Jesus proclaimed the Father and wrought miracles. But as Jesus finished his mission, Christ withdrew from him, and Jesus then suffered and was raised up; but Christ, being wholly spiritual, has remained throughout unmoved and untouched. This distinction between the Divine Christ and the human Jesus who, according to the theory, were never truly one, but were merely associated together during the latter's three-year ministry, was the inevitable outcome of this theory. Untold mischief has followed from this dual supposition, and the end is not yet in sight.

Little is said in Paul's earlier epistles regarding the relationship of Christ to the cosmos; that issue had not been raised in the minds of the people to whom he wrote: but with the coming of the Colossian heresy, the need was present, and the apostle dealt with it summarily. The first thing which Paul did was to show the preeminence of Christ with reference to all creation; and it would be difficult to find a more

sweeping statement, than the one which he made in this section of the lesson text. Being the image of the invisible God, Christ is the "first-born" of all creation. Vincent notes that "as *image* points to *revelation*, so *first-born* points to *eternal pre-existence*."

Wuest, in commenting on this relationship says, "The word 'first-born' is *prototokos*. The Greek word implied two things, *priority* to all creation and *sovereignty* over all creation. In the first meaning, we see the absolute pre-existence of the Logos. Since our Lord existed before all created things, he must be uncreated. Since he is uncreated, he is eternal. Since he is eternal, he is God. Since he is God, he cannot be one of the emanations from deity of which the Gnostic speaks, even though he proceeds from God the Father as the Son. In the second meaning we see that he is the natural ruler, the acknowledged head of God's household. Thus again, he cannot be one of the emanations from deity in whom the divine essence is present but diffused. *He is Lord of creation*." Wuest renders verse 15 in these words: "Who is a derived reproduction and manifestation of the Deity, the invisible One, the One who has priority to and sovereignty over all creation."

Those who read the Bible carefully will notice that the creation of the universe is attributed to the "word of God" (spelled with a small "w") and to Christ; but when these facts are considered in the full context of the Scriptures, it is easy to see that there is no discrepancy. "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33: 6, 9.) "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appeared." (Heb. 11: 3.)

We learn from the Book of John that the word of God was personified, and appeared in history as God's Son. "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. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." (John 1: 1-3, 14.) When the word, by which God created the universe, became flesh, and appeared in history as Christ Jesus, it was both proper and correct to speak of him as the creator of all things. "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." (Col. 1: 16; cf. Heb. 1: 2, 10; 1 Cor. 8: 6.)

### With Reference to the Church

(Col. 1: 18-23)

*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unprovable before him: if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister.*

After showing that Christ is head of all creation, Paul next points out that he is the head of the spiritual body, which is the church. Or, the apostle showed the place which Christ occupies in human life and in human history. Man was created by God, and was endowed with freedom of choice, which means that he is responsible for his ultimate destiny. He is either for the Lord, or against him; or a partner or a foe of the divine will. And since man yielded to the seducer in the garden of Eden, he has played this dual



role. No man has ever been perfect, that is, no purely human being has; and, try as he may, he will find himself on both sides of the moral relationship which he has toward God. Thus, the responsibility for human destiny, both the eternal destiny of the individual, and the destiny of mankind on this earth, is, in a very real sense, in human hands. God's purposes for the human race can be realized only through the submission of the human will to the divine will; *which in this age of the world is expressed only through Christ.* The salvation is of the Lord, but man is held responsible for his attitude toward it. God makes the offer of salvation, but man must accept it, if he is to be eternally blessed. (Cf. Eph. 2: 8-10.)

Christ came into the world to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19: 10); and we are told that the entire world was in sin, when his work began. (Cf. Gal. 3: 22; Rom. 3: 9, 10, 23; 11: 32; 1 John 5: 19.) It was essential therefore that mankind be redeemed from sin, before a life with God could be possible. Jesus, accordingly, set up a kingdom, which is also called his church (cf. Matt. 16: 18, 19), and made his plans to call men into it. He first chose some disciples, carefully trained them, before he made the sacrifice which made the church or kingdom possible. After his resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven to enable the apostles to make known the will of God to men, and to take up his abode in the church itself. (Cf. Acts 2: 4; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17.) The will of God regarding the salvation of the lost is expressed in the gospel, which Paul says in the section of the lesson text now before us, was preach "in all creation under heaven." (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16, 19, 20.)

As fast as people obeyed the gospel, they were saved; and the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2: 47), or translated them into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Col. 1: 13). And so, just as Christ was the firstborn of the cosmic creation, he also is the firstborn of the new creation. "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: 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: 19-23.)

Christ is the head of all things—has the preeminence, and, as such, his position and relationship is for ever fixed; but those who are redeemed by his blood, and have been given a new life (cf. Rom. 6: 3, 4; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 2: 10; Col. 3: 4; Tit. 3: 5), must cling to their newly acquired possession, if they are to have it in eternity. (Col. 1: 23.)

#### Paul's Commission under Christ

(Col. 1: 24-29)

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid for ages and generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ; whereunto I labor also, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*

The apostle Paul was in prison in Rome, when he wrote the Colossian letter; and, so far as the record is concerned, he was writing to brethren who had never seen his face. The epistle contains some severe warnings, and Paul wanted his readers to know that he was working under a divine commission, and that whatever he was suffering' it was being done in consequence of the ministry which he had received from the Lord. (Cf. Acts 9: 15, 16.)

The term "dispensation" refers to God's plan for the world, and Paul's specific assignment in that plan. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.) God's over-all plan for the world has been divided into three states—patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian, and the present text finds its application in the latter age. Paul discusses this dispensation at length in Ephesians, which, as already noted, is a companion letter to Colossians. (See Eph., chapters 1 and 3.)

A "mystery" is something which has not been made known; and inasmuch as the gospel had only recently been revealed, when Paul wrote the letter we are now considering, it was still spoken of as a mystery. The heretics, as we have already seen, were fond of mysteries, but Paul wanted the Colos-

sian brethren to know that they were the beneficiaries of the greatest mystery of all, namely, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." This is another way of speaking of the mystery of the gospel of Christ. It was a mystery, because it was a hitherto unknown and unrevealed truth, a way of life in Christ which, in previous ages, all the ingenuity of men had never been able to discover. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.) It was the true way of salvation, in contrast with the spurious speculations of the mystery religions of the world; and, in spite of all the wisdom and knowledge of men, it is still beyond the comprehension of the human race, except as men are willing to allow the Divine Author to teach its truths unto them. (Cf. Matt. 11: 25-27; 1 Cor. 1: 20-25.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is Jesus such a universally admired character?

What are the two principal views which men have of him?

How do we know which one of them is the true one?

How do we know that his character was not invented by the New Testament writers?

### The Golden Text

Why did Paul write the words of the golden text?

Why refer to the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?

Where are all spiritual blessings to be found and obtained?

What method did the apostle use in replying to the heretics of Colossae?

### The Preeminence of Christ with Reference to All Creation

What was the nature of the Colossian heresy which was troubling the Colossian Christians?

What was their attitude toward the creation of the world?

What were some of the chief tenets of the heretical system?

What three principal errors did they advocate?

What were some of the points which Paul made in reply to their false teaching?

What effect did their views have on the scriptural teaching regarding the person of Jesus?

What did they actually teach regarding Jesus Christ?

Why does Paul stress the preeminence of Jesus over the created universe?

In what sense is he the firstborn of all creation?

What does the Bible teach with reference to the creation of the material universe?

### With Reference to the Church

After showing that Christ is the head of all creation, what did he then set forth?

In what way is mankind related to God's eternal purpose?

Why is man responsible for his own destiny?

How only can the human race be pleasing to God?

What was the mission of Christ to the world and how did he accomplish it?

How alone can men learn of his will for them?

What happens when people become obedient to the gospel message?

What important lessons do we learn from this section of the lesson text?

### Paul's Commission under Christ

Under what circumstances did Paul write his letter to the Colossians?

Why was he so careful to have them understand something of the commission which he had?

In what sense is the term "dispensation" used in the lesson text?

In what way is the letter to Colossae related to Ephesians?

Why did Paul emphasize the term "mystery" in the letter now under consideration?

What is the mystery of the gospel?

## Lesson III—April 19, 1970

## WARNINGS AND ADMONITIONS

## Lesson Text

## Col. 2: 8-23

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

9 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,

10 And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ;

12 Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, *I say*, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses;

14 Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross;

15 Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show

of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day:

17 Which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.

18 Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances,

21 Handle not, nor taste, nor touch

22 (All which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*AS therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*” (Col. 2: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 2: 1-6.

## Daily Bible Readings

April 13.	M . . . . .	Apostasy Within the Church (Acts. 20: 28-35)
April 14.	T . . . . .	Deceivers to Appear (Matt. 7: 15-23)
April 15.	W . . . . .	Spirit Spoke of Apostasy (1 Tim. 4: 1-5)
April 16.	T . . . . .	Deceivers and Deceived (2 Tim. 3: 15-18)
April 17.	F . . . . .	Desire for Falsehood (2 Tim. 4: 1-8)
April 18.	S . . . . .	Freedom Through the Truth (John 8: 31, 32)
April 19.	S . . . . .	Faith Made Shipwreck (1 Tim. 1: 18-20)

Time.—Colossians was written in A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

The terms “warnings” and “admonitions,” or the things for which they stand, are found throughout

the Bible. These words stand for ideas which Jehovah has used, and is still using, in an effort to get peo-

pie to turn from their evil ways, and walk in the paths of righteousness. And too, the Lord's people have all through the ages, been in danger of being attacked by their adversaries, and a gracious Lord has never failed to sound a warning. The Speaker's Bible sums up the situation in the following way: "Set the trumpet to thy mouth." How often in the Hebrew Scriptures do we hear the same curt, almost desperate cry, as from a panting runner with only enough breath to gasp it out! Those days were unsettled times, with dangers all too often lurking in the darkness; for one never knew when his hereditary enemy might be coming quietly toward him, with the success of the attack depending upon its unexpectedness. Such situations demanded that the watchmen be on the alert at all times; and it was the height of folly for any one to ignore the warning.

The note of alarm recurs so continuously throughout the whole of the Old Testament, that there is hardly a prophet who did not, in one way or another, employ the metaphor. The sense of impending disaster lay heavy upon their minds; and, having heard Jehovah say to them, "Sound the alarm!" they lost no time in warning the people. One of the functions of a prophet, in fact the primary function of a prophet, was to speak God's message to the people, whatever that message might contain. Listen to Amos, "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?"

(Amos 3: 8.) The same spirit characterized Jeremiah, when he said, "And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." (Jer. 20: 9.)

Who does not remember Jehovah's word to Ezekiel regarding the mutual responsibility of the spokesman for Jehovah and the people." (Read Ezek. 33: 1-6.) The principle contained in the passage just quoted is as applicable now, as it was during any previous age. (Cf. Gen. 6;

2 Pet. 2: 5.) Not only are the warnings and admonitions of the Old Testament preserved for our learning and edification (cf. Rom. 15: 4; 1 Cor. 10: 6, 11), we have the same type of instruction in the New Testament. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Rev., chapters 2 and 3.) No one has ever been more urgent in this respect, than our Lord; but how many people today make bold to ignore his warnings and admonitions! No one has ever given more to his people, and it is certain that he will not let them settle down in sin, with the pretence that he does not see that which they are doing. Whether we like his warnings and admonitions or not, they are ever in his word—warnings and admonitions which are tremendous, red-hot, and which can never be cooled by the passing of time. No one in any age of the world ever blew so clear a blast of warning and admonition, as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

### The Golden Text

*"As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him."*

These words should be considered in the light of their immediate context, namely, "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." (Col. 2: 6, 7.) It appears proper to say that this is the practical application of that which has already been said in the epistle, from which the lesson text is taken; and all that is to follow. Paul indeed exposed and warned against the heretical teaching which

was done in Colossae; but it is also true that he expressed his confidence in, and his approval of, those who had not succumbed to the false teaching; and it was his desire, of course, to reclaim any and all who had embraced the heresy. (Cf. Gal. 6: 1.) However, we should always keep in mind the fact that the warm approval and commendation, a characteristic feature in all of Paul's epistles, is never allowed to gloss over and obscure his dominant purpose in writing, namely, to *teach, warn, correct*, and move God's people to fuller Christian living. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

The term "walk," as used by Paul in the passage now before us, indicates their manner of living, in consequence of their having accepted Christ as their Master and Lord. The word "received" carries with it the idea that they had accepted the true Christ Jesus, who is indeed the redeemer and director of our lives; rather than the "dual-personality" which the false teachers had set before them. Paul wanted the Colossian Christians to know *whom* they received, and then *what* was expected of them, as they continued in his service. The true servant of the Lord is not content with simply getting people to acknowledge and accept Christ; he wants those who are converted to Christ to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (See 2 Pet. 1: 5-11; 3: 18.)

It was pointed out earlier, in this series of lessons taken from Colossians, that Paul's purpose in writing the letter was to expose and warn against *The Colossian Heresy*; and that fact should be kept before us throughout our study of the epistle. There was a specific situation which

the apostle dealt with initially; but the principles which he set forth are applicable to other situations, which may surround the Lord's people in other times and places. We must, indeed, pay attention to the apostle's "general observations"; but we must also listen to his specific warnings and admonitions. The Interpreter's Bible notes that Paul could be both friendly and influential, which is to say that he knew how to speak kindly to people, while at the same time making them realize that here is a message to which they must listen. It is a wonderful thing for one to be courteous, as he endeavors to proclaim the word of the Lord; but it is also a quality devoutly to be wished, when the teacher is able to come to the point, and to make certain that no interested person is going to miss his meaning, or escape his challenge, because of the courteous remarks which he has addressed to them. No one can read Paul's letter to the saints and faithful brethren in Colossae, without realizing that that was the ability which he possessed in an unusual measure.

## The Text Explained

### Warnings and Admonitions against False Teaching with Reference to Speculative Philosophy

(Col. 2: 8-15)

*Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power: in whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which*

*was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

It is well to note that Paul, after establishing confidence between his readers and himself, comes to grips with the issue which he wants to get before them. He told them, in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken, just how they should live; and then, in the section of the lesson text now before us, he told the Colossians what not to do. The devil is never willing to leave the people of the Lord alone, to serve him and work out their own salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 5: 8, 9; Phil. 2: 12, 13); and so, in the case of the people of the lesson text, he was at work through the false teachers, in an effort to undermine their faith, and take them captive unto his will (see 2 Tim. 2: 26).

There is a principle involved in Paul's approach to the question now before us, which we cannot afford to

miss or ignore, namely, After dwelling at length on the noncontroversial introduction to the Christian faith, which he and the Colossian brethren shared in common, and by which their minds were elevated to the inspiring contemplation of the exalted state of Christ in the entire universe, as was pointed out in the previous lesson; the apostle was then ready to concentrate on the issues between them. Thus, if one must criticize, let his purpose be to persuade, rather than merely to denounce; and if one's purpose is persuasion, then let him first establish a feeling of mutuality with those he would correct.

The particular thing which Paul warned the Colossian Christians against, was their being taken captive through one's philosophy and vain deceit. The form in which Paul stated the issue, according to Lightfoot, "is a measure of the imminence of the peril." The literal idea is, Be always on your guard, lest there shall be any one who would make a slave of you, through his philosophy and vain deceit. The term "philosophy," literally, the love of wisdom, can be used in either a good or a bad sense; but, as the matter stands in the New Testament, it is used only in a bad sense. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The manner in which Paul refers to the question, "his philosophy," shows that the warning is not against *all* philosophy; but only against the false teaching of the heretics. Wuest thinks that *kai* (and), connecting philosophy and vain deceit, should be rendered "even," thus making "vain deceit" explanatory of philosophy. The expressions "the tradition of men" and "the rudiments of the world" indicate something of the source and subject matter of the heretical philosophy. It stems from men and the world, rather than from Christ.

Verses 9 and 10 may be thought of as the reason why Paul condemned the human and worldly based philosophy. The false teachers represented Christ as being only one of the several emanations of deity, but Paul, speaking by inspiration, boldly declares that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,

and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." Lightfoot, in commenting on verse 9, says, "The apostle justifies the foregoing charge that the doctrine was not according to Christ: 'In Christ dwells the whole *pleroma* (fulness, plenitude) the entire fulness of the Godhead, whereas they represent it to you as dispersed among several spiritual agencies. Christ is the fountain-head of all spiritual life, whereas they teach you to seek it in communion with inferior creatures.'"

The basic meaning of "Godhead" is the state and quality of a god, and in the case of the Bible, of Jehovah God. Manhood is that which makes a man a man, and Godhead is that which makes God God; and when the term "Godhead" is ascribed to any being, by inspiration, the affirmation is that all of that which enters into the idea of God belongs to him. There is therefore no difference between God, his Spirit, and his Word in this respect. The terms Godhead, Divinity, and Deity are equivalent, and all refer to God; and they are, of course, applicable alike to Jehovah, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

The term "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 in the King James Version are Acts 17: 29; Rom. 1: 20, and Col. 2: 9. Only the first and third of these passages are so rendered in the American Standard Version. Furthermore, in no two instances is the rendering from the same original Greek word, as may be seen from the following analysis:

Acts 17: 29—*theios* (found also in 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4): *that which is divine*. The contrast here is between the Divine Being and idols, which are the work of men's hands. (Read Acts 17: 22-29.)

Rom. 1: 20—*theiotes* (only here in the New Testament): *the divine nature and attributes*. The term is appropriate here, because God is not *personally* known by his revelation in nature; only something of his nature and attributes are seen. (Cf. Psalm 19: 1.)

Col. 2: 9—*theotes* (only here in the New Testament): the Divine Personality. Paul's aim in this passage is to show that Christ is just as divine as God is; this is the apostle's declaration of the absolute deity of Jesus, so far as his relation to God is concerned. (Read the context.)

It has already been pointed out in these studies that *The Colossian Heresy* involved at least three major elements, namely, (1) Jewish formalism; (2) speculative mysticism, representing the germs of that which later developed into Gnosticism; and (3) Essenism, the medium through which the Jewish and Gnostic elements came into combination. Some false teachers in Colossae evidently insisted on circumcision (Jewish formalism). The Judaizers tried to make Christianity conform to Judaism, to the extent that the two would continue to be a Jewish sect—Christianity being merely an extension of Judaism.

Paul, having shown that Christians are complete in Christ, told the Colossians that they had already received the circumcision of Christ, when they were buried with him in baptism, and raised with him to a new life. (Read Rom. 6: 3, 4.) He further showed them that Christ had freed them entirely from the law of Moses, and that by his resurrection from the dead, he had achieved a lasting victory over the principalities and powers, so that man, if he chooses to serve God, is for ever free from all such moral and spiritual forces. The Interpreter's Bible notes that when one is brought into loving fellowship with God, who is entirely in control of the universe, and free to work his sovereign will, and when that one is committed to use his freedom in Christ to serve the good purposes of God, then all the powers of the universe, both natural and moral, personal and impersonal, can neither frighten him nor cause him to fail in his resolve to serve God, in the creative obedience of a morally free life. (Cf. Rom. 8: 31-39.)

#### With Reference to Erroneous Practices

(Col. 2: 16-19)

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sab-*

*bath day; which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God.*

After dealing with the doctrinal phase of *The Colossian Heresy*, Paul next turns to their code of conduct and their various forms of worship. The term "therefore," near the beginning of this section of the lesson text, connects that which the apostle is about to say, with that which was said in the preceding section. Christ abolished the law of Moses, and gained a triumphant victory over all powers which could affect the Christian's relationship with God; and now he tells the Colossian brethren that they should not allow any man to take them to task, or sit in judgment over them, because of their failure to observe the various rites of the law of Moses, or any other unauthorized service, that is, not authorized by the law of Christ.

It is sometimes said that all of the law of Moses, and especially the ten commandments, was annulled except that part which was brought over and made a part of the new order, which included nine of the ten commandments; but that is not what the Bible teaches on the question, as may be seen by reading such scriptures as Jer. 31: 31-34. The law of Moses, in its entirety, including all of the ten commandments, was nailed to the cross of Christ, and what we have in the new order is that which was authorized by Christ himself. If one will consider the facts in the case, he will see that each of the ten commandments was based upon a moral principle, which is eternal in its nature. Those principles were in existence before the law of Moses was given, and they continued after it ended. A commandment is a means by which a principle is applied: and it was Jesus, and not Moses, who gave the commandments which apply those eternal principles to people of this age. There is no place in the reign of Christ for the seventh-day

sabbath, but there is a place for the "Lord's day"; and for the commandments which apply the other nine principles which also underlay the other nine commandments of the decalogue.

The Christians in Colossae stood in danger of losing their inheritance in two ways, (1) by deliberately following the false teachers, and expecting to find moral and spiritual guidance from a source which could not supply it; and (2) by being so overawed by the arbitrary claims to a higher spirituality, which were being advanced by the heretics among them, until they reached the point where they lost faith in the adequacy of their spiritual relationship with Christ to furnish the blessings which they felt were in store for them. The Colossian brethren were in danger of being led to the point of seeking a higher spiritual security, than they had already found in the liberating gospel of Christ. This situation must have brought deep sorrow and concern into the heart of Paul. (Cf. Gal. 5: 1.)

The great mistake which the perpetrators of *The Colossian Heresy* were making, was not "holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God." (Cf. Eph. 4: 11-16.) No amount of ascetic culture can possibly compensate for that which Christ has ordained for his people. And while we are not bothered today with the heresy which was advocated in Colossae, we are troubled in many instances by those who are not satisfied with the Lord's regulations for his people. When people hold fast the Head, they may then expect the body to grow and function as God ordained that it should.

#### A Question and a Word of Caution

(Col. 2: 20-23)

*If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doc-*

*trines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

Lightfoot paraphrases this section of the lesson text in these words: "You died with Christ to your old life. All mundane relations have ceased for you. Why then do you—you who have attained your spiritual manhood—submit still to the rudimentary disciple of children? Why do you—you who are citizens of heaven—bow your necks afresh to the tyranny of material ordinances, as though you were still living in the world? It is the same old story again; the same round of hard, meaningless, vexatious prohibitions. *Handle not, Taste not, Touch not.* What folly! When all these things—these meats and drinks and the like—are earthly, perishable, wholly trivial and unimportant! They are used, and there is an end of them. What is this but to draw down upon yourselves the denunciations uttered by the prophets of old? What is this but to abandon God's word for precepts which are issued by human authority and inculcated by human teachers? All such things have a show of wisdom, I grant. There is an efficacious parade of religious devotion, an eager affectation of humility; there is a stern ascetic rigor which ill-treats the body, but there is nothing of any real value to check indulgence of the flesh."

Thayer points out that "will-worship" is that which one devises and prescribes for himself, contrary to that which is ordained by Christ; while Arndt-Gingrich call it self-made, or perhaps would-be, religion. The original word is found nowhere else in the New Testament, but its meaning is clear, as it respected the heretics of Paul's day; and it is just as clear and pertinent to any of our day, who are not satisfied with the Lord's arrangement. *Some professed Christians seem to think that because something may be beautiful and impressive to them, it must also be to God; but they will learn, but perhaps too late, that they were sadly mistaken!*



## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In what way are the terms "warnings" and "admonitions" related to the Bible as a whole?

Cite several examples.

In what way is all of this brought home to us?

### The Golden Text

In what setting are the words of the golden text found?

How is the passage related to the epistle as a whole?

In what way did the Colossian Christians receive Christ?

What does Paul mean by the term "walk," as used in the golden text?

What was Paul's over-all purpose in writing the letter to the saints in Colossae?

### Warnings and Admonitions against False Teaching with Reference to Speculative Philosophy

What preparation did Paul make before issuing the warnings and admonitions?

Why are warnings and admonitions always necessary, so far as the Lord's people are concerned?

What principle guided the apostle in seeking to set the Colossians in the right course?

What did he warn them against and why was this important?

In what way did Paul describe the heretical philosophy of the false teachers?

What reason did he give for condemning the heresy now in question?

In what way did the apostle show that Christ is deity incarnate?

What is the Bible teaching regarding the "Godhead"?

What were the three major elements of the Colossian Heresy?

Why was it unnecessary for the Colossian saints to submit to circumcision?

In what way were the Lord's people freed from the law of Moses?

In what sense are Christians free today?

### With Reference to Erroneous Practices

What two issues did Paul deal with in the first two sections of today's lesson text?

What should the child of God permit no man to do to him?

In what way is the new order under Christ related to the old order under Moses?

What, then, did Christ do when he abolished the law?

In what great danger did the Colossian Christians stand?

What course did the false teachers probably take in their effort to capture the Colossians?

What great mistake did the perpetrators of the heresy make with reference to Christ?

What lesson is there in this for our day?

### A Question and a Word of Caution

In what way had the Colossian Christians died to the rudiments of the world?

What were some of the ordinances to which some of them were apparently subjecting themselves?

What shows the folly of such a course?

What is will-worship and what application does it have for our day?

## Lesson IV—April 26, 1970

## SEEKING THE THINGS THAT ARE ABOVE

### Lesson Text

Col. 3: 1-17

1 If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.

2 Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.

3 For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry;

6 For which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience:

7 Wherein ye also once walked,

when ye lived in these things;

8 But now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth:

9 Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings,

10 And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him:

11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scyth'-i-an, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.

12 Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and

forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye:

14 And above all these things *put on* love, which is the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**—*"But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."* (Rom. 6: 8.)

**DEVOTIONAL READING.**—Col. 3: 18-25.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 20.	M.....	Discern Things That Differ (Phil. 1: 1-10)
April 21.	T.....	Senses Exercised (Heb. 5: 8-10)
April 22.	W.....	The Law of God (Psalm 19: 7-14)
April 23.	T.....	Mortifying Deeds of Body (Rom. 8: 12-17)
April 24.	F.....	Crucified With Christ (Gal. 2: 20-22)
April 25.	S.....	Buried With Christ (Col. 2: 12-15)
April 26.	S.....	Raised With Christ (Rom. 6: 1-4)

**TIME.**—Colossians was written in A.D. 62.

**PLACE.**—The epistle was written in Rome.

**PERSONS.**—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

We saw in our lesson last week that Paul, when he was discussing the heretical philosophy which was seriously affecting the Colossian Christians, told them that they had been buried with Christ in baptism, and that they had also been raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. This experience had had the effect of uniting them with Christ, with a new kind of life to live, and a new and higher goal to strive toward. Throughout the remainder of chapter 2, Paul discussed, largely in a negative manner, some things which they should guard against, if they were to hold on to their freedom in Christ. And now, in the beginning of chapter 3 (there were, of course, no chapter and verse divisions in Paul's original letters), he turns again to the proposition, raised in 2: 12, and endeavors to get the Lord's people to focus their attention on the journey which will ultimately take them into the presence of God himself.

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson, that the false teachers in the Colossian church did not regard themselves as enemies of Christianity, but only felt that they were enlarging and enriching its teaching.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.

17 And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Je'-sus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

They apparently accepted the truth of Christianity, but tried to add to it some deeper knowledge to which they claimed to have had access. This claim, of course, was totally false, and their efforts at "embellishing" the Christian system was wholly unacceptable to the Lord. Paul's answer to the entire heretical endeavor was, in a nutshell, simply this: Christ, and Christ alone, is the answer to all the needs of any one who wants to be saved. There is no material cure for spiritual illness; or, earth-born remedies can never suffice for heaven-born pilgrims. Here is the way Paul stated the proposition, both negatively and positively: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power." (Col. 2: 8-10.)

And so, being dead with Christ, Christian people, if they remain faithful, are for ever removed from the sphere of elemental spirits, and the ascetic regulations which their

services impose, have no further place in their lives. Instead of submitting to such regulations, the Lord's people are to oppose such with all the might of their being. In the language of Paul, "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." (Eph. 6: 10-12.) Thus, instead of seeking to win our way to heaven through a system of earthly discipline, we must seek to relate our earthly relationships (we are still in the world while living for Christ) to the heavenly nature which we share with Christ.

### The Golden Text

*"But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."* It is well for any person who wants and expects to be saved, to keep before him the cost of his salvation. If man had not sinned, there would have been no need for a Saviour; but when the human race became alienated from God, the only possible way for him to save the sinner, while remaining just himself, was for the righteous to die for the unrighteous. In the words of Peter, "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." (1 Pet. 3: 18.) Something of God's motive in all of this is expressed by Paul in this way: "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.)

But no one can be saved from sin who does not first die to sin. As Paul closed his great argument regarding the salvation made possible through Christ's suffering, he showed that grace was far greater than sin (see Rom. 5: 18-21); or, the apostle said, "But where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly;" and that apparently suggested to some that they should continue to sin, so that grace would continue to abound. But Paul showed the folly of that in the opening verses of chapter 6, namely, "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? 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." (Rom. 6: 1-4.)

The next three verses of Rom. 6 (verses 5-7) give some explanations regarding our new relationship with Christ, and show the absolute necessity for the new kind of life. 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 Christ through baptism into death. And unless we are buried with him, we cannot be raised, as Christ was, from the dead through the glory of the Father, into that state where we can enjoy a new kind of life. This "newness of life" is the same in principle as that which Christ enjoys (as we shall see further on in this study); and the apostle Paul specifically implies that we are expected to walk in it. And so, in the words of the golden text, "But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him," that is, live with him here and now. There are few passages of scripture in the New Testament, which give Christians greater encouragement for living the Christian life, than the words of the golden text and their context. They should be read often, with care and prayerfulness.

## The Text Explained

### The True Sphere of the Christian Life

(Col. 3: 1-4)

*If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.*

Having established the fact, beyond any question, that Christians are complete in Christ, and that he is the source of the life—the new kind of life—which has been imparted to them, Paul opens this section of the lesson text with a call to consistency in living in the sphere into which they were called, (cf. John 3: 3-5; Gal. 3: 26, 27.) If Christ is the source of their life, then there is no other way for them to live, except in and through him. They were dead to the old life, and no Christian can consistently return to it.

All Christians are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5: 17); they have been created anew in the Lord (cf. Eph. 4: 24; 2: 10). The proposition is expressed by Paul in this way: "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." (Tit. 3: 4-7.) The "renewing" which Paul mentions in the passage just quoted, is *the renewing* which is "effected by the Holy Spirit, Tit. 3: 5" (Thayer); and the whole process which Paul refers to is precisely that which Jesus means by the new birth (John 3: 3-5).

Taking an over-all view of Tit. 2:

1-3: 11, we have a sketch of the true features of Christian character, which God expects of his people; and, looking at the question from

this point of view, it is easy to see that the passage just cited is a good commentary on the section of the lesson text now before us. Christianity affects the entire relationship of those who embrace it. The apostle Paul recognizes that the influence of the Lord's people depends, not only upon the truth of the gospel and the effective manner in which it is presented; but also on the lives of the Christians themselves. This is especially true in their relationship with those who are outside the church. The Lord's people are obligated to put into practice the gospel which they accepted and proclaim.

One of the most significant failures which characterize the average Christian today, is with reference to the recognition of the nature of the life, which is his in Christ. We have already seen something of this life, in Rom. 6: 4, namely, "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*." The expression "newness of life" is a much stronger phrase, than "*new life*." The life which the risen child of God has in Christ, is a new kind or quality of life—it is the life, pointed out earlier in this lesson, which God imports to him; and it is eternal in its nature—as eternal as Christ himself is eternal. God makes those who obey the gospel alive with Christ; and it is this life which has the quality of endurance. And if it is maintained, as God intends that it should be, it will never be taken away from its possessor.

Jesus, in his conversation with Martha, said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall *never* die. Believeth thou this?" (John 11: 25, 26.) The life which is ours in Christ is of the same nature and quality as that of Christ himself; for the apostle Paul plainly declares that Christ is our life. It is regrettable that so many professed Christians think of eternal life as something which we can have, only when this earthly pilgrimage is over. This view of eter-

nal life, of course, takes into consideration its *duration*, and completely ignores the *quality* of the life. The Bible nowhere teaches that the life which we are now considering, is ours *eternally*, while we are still in the flesh; but the Scriptures just as clearly teach, that we do have an eternal *quality*, of life, that is, a life which is eternal in its nature, here and now. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5: 13.)

The lesson which we need to learn here, is that we have something which is worth keeping, something which both deserves and requires our very best efforts. We have a treasure in Christ—our life—which can never be destroyed, that is, annihilated; and if we keep this truth always before us—set our minds on the things that are above, instead of on the things which are upon the earth—we will do our best to hold on to this blessed possession. This life, of course, can be destroyed in the sense of its being lost in hell. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.) "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." (1 John 5: 10-12.)

### Sins to Be Avoided

(Col. 3: 5-11)

*Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him the created him:*

*where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.*

After having repudiated the false asceticism of *The Colossian Heresy*, which sought to bring the life of the Christian in subjection to a set of external regulations, such as "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using)," the apostle, in the section of the lesson text now before us, proceeds to demand a far more radical denial of self, than either the false teachers or the Colossians themselves had apparently thought of. Instead of merely regulating their earth bound life by the observance of human ordinances, Paul calls on the Lord's people to dig out by the roots, and utterly destroy, "your members which are upon the earth." This is in keeping with the idea of their having put off the old man, and having put on the new man. If the lives of Christian people are going to continue to be characterized by the same old sinful thoughts and practices, which were theirs before they came into covenant relationship with the Lord, then what is the advantage of making the change in relationship? (Cf. Matt. 16: 24-26.) If any one is in doubt about the meaning of any of the terms which Paul uses to describe a life in the flesh, he can easily inform himself by consulting an English dictionary, or a good Bible dictionary, or both. Practically all of the words in the paragraph we are now considering, are well understood by the average person. (Cf. Eph. 4: 17-32; Gal. 5: 16-21.)

The motive behind the drastic action, which Paul called upon the Colossian brethren to take (the same principle, of course, applies to all Christians), is this: "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him." This is another way of setting forth the basic steps in conversion, as we have already seen, as indicated by such passages as John 3: 3-5; 2 Cor. 5: 17; Tit. 3: 5; and Eph. 2: 8-10. Not only are the Lord's people created anew, at

the time of their conversion to Christ; the process will continue as long as they are faithful to the Lord.

The original word for "renewing" in Tit. 3: 5, is *anakainosis* (genitive singular, *anakainōseōs*). The root word, in its various forms, is found in the New Testament, only in the writings of Paul (Rom. 12: 2; Tit. 3: 5; 2 Cor. 4: 16; Col. 3: 10; Heb. 6: 6). The word in Col. 3: 10 and 2 Cor. 4: 16 is *anakainōō*. It is easy to see, as already indicated, that the "renewing" of Tit. 3: 5 has reference to the spiritual rebirth, when a person becomes a Christian (cf. John 3: 3-5; 2 Cor. 5: 17); but in such passages as Col. 3: 10; Rom. 12: 2; and 2 Cor. 4: 16, the idea is that of a continuous growth and development of the child of God himself. Not only does one become a new creature when he is born again, or converted to Christ, that is not the end of the matter. The new creature in Christ is expected to strive, the rest of his life, to become like "the image of him that created him." (Cf. Gen. 1: 26, 27.) It is only by this continuous renewal, that one can come to have the true knowledge of God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18.) There is no place in the Christian system for racial, religious, cultural, and social differences, which divide Christians from each other. The Lord's people must remember that "Christ is all, and in all"; and that means that he loves and cares for all his people, as they bow in submission to him.

#### Virtues to Be Cultivated

(Col. 3: 12-17)

*P?it on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatsoever*

*ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Those who are familiar with the writings of Paul, will readily recognize the fact that the apostle follows the same plan in writing to the Colossian Christians, that he did in the Galatian letter, that is, positive traits of character are placed over against, and take the place of, the destructive sins which must be rooted out and destroyed, if one is to be acceptable to God. (Cf. Gal. 5: 16-24.) This basic truth is set forth in many parts of the New Testament. It will not do much good for one to root out the evil, if he does not replace it with good. No better commentary on this point can be found, than the illustration which Jesus gave, namely, "But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation." (Matt. 12: 43-45.)

The lesson which the parable just quoted teaches is obvious. After getting rid of thoughts, habits, and ways of living, which are wrong and degrading, the process is but half completed. The evils which have been driven out must be replaced immediately with the good, honorable, truthful, and best. This is also Paul's lesson to Titus, namely, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 11-14.)

Uprooting sins is to be com-

mended, providing that the one so doing sets out at once to grow virtues in their place. Righteousness is not merely the absence of evil; it also involves the doing of that which God commands his people to do. (Cf. Psalm 119: 172; Matt. 3: 15; Luke 7: 29, 30.) If one merely cleans the weeds out of his field, and prepares the ground for a crop, but plants no good seed; he only invites a new crop of weeds, briars, and other obnoxious growths. And so, if religion is to be a power for good in our lives, 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. There must be something in which we believe, in the full meaning of that term. (Cf. Heb. 11: 6; James 2: 14-26.)

The picture which Paul places before us, in the section of the lesson text we are now considering, is that of a man who is putting on his clothing. After mentioning several items, the apostle then says, "And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." This is to say that love is that part of one's apparel, which holds all the others in place. Goodspeed renders verse 14 in these words: "And over all these put on love, which com-

pletes them and fastens them all together." Following the same general idea, Conybeare translates the passage in this way: "And over all the rest put on the robe of love, which binds together and completes the whole."

The great importance of love is further stated by Paul in these words: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. 13: 1-3.) If love is not the overruling principle in our lives, our other virtues will amount to nothing. For example, if forgiveness is not full and complete, that is, from the heart and motivated by love, then we might as well not bother with the other virtues which Paul mentions. (Cf. Matt. 18: 21-35.) The Christian must do all he can to bring about, and maintain, the fellowship in the body of Christ; and be thankful for the opportunity of doing so.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Give the general setting of our lesson for today, with reference to the preceding study.

How did the false teachers in Colossae feel toward Christianity itself?

In what way did Paul deal with their efforts to lure Christians away from the Lord's way?

What is the real meaning of being united with Christ, as it respects the world?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the cost of our salvation and the effect this should have on the Lord's people.

Why must people die to sin before they can be saved from it?

How do we become united with Christ?

What does it mean for us to live with Christ?

### The True Sphere of the Christian Life

What truths did Paul establish before making the statement in this section of the lesson text?

What conclusion must be reached, if Christ is the source of our lives?

In what way are all Christians related to Christ?

How are redeemed people made new in Christ?

In what way does the Christian religion affect those who embrace it?

What great failure characterizes many Christian people in all ages?

In what sense do we have eternal life now and in what sense will we have it in heaven?

What is meant by the "quality" of eternal life?

Why should Christian people have a clear view of their possession in Christ?

### Sins to be Avoided

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

Discuss the difference between the heretics' and Paul's demands for self-denial.

What is the nature of the apostle's call for dealing with sinful practices?

What motive did he assign for this vigorous action?

What does Paul mean by putting off the old man and putting on the new man?

In what senses are people who are converted to Christ renewed?

What, then, is the significance of being new creatures in Christ?

What does the Lord demand regarding the relationship of all of his people?

#### Virtues to Be Cultivated

In what way does Paul deal with negative and positive traits of character?

Why is such a procedure essential?

In what way did Jesus illustrate this principle?

How did Paul also illustrate it?

What, then, must always be done after uprooting vices, if one is to be successful?

How does the apostle picture the Christian as he takes on the new traits of character?

Why is love so important and how is it pictured?

### Lesson V—May 3, 1970

## PRECEPT ANI) GREETING

### Lesson Text

Col. 4: 7-18

7 All my affairs shall Tych'-i-cus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:

8 Whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts;

9 Together with O-nes'-i-mus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that *arc done* here.

10 Ar-is-tar'-chus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Bar'-na-bas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him),

11 And Je'-sus that is called Jus'-tus, who are of the circumcision: these only *are my* fellow-workers unto the Kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me.

12 Ep'-a-phras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Je'-sus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his

prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

13 For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in La-od-i-ce'-a, and for them in Hi-e-rap'-o-lis.

14 Luke, the beloved physician, and De'-mas saluteth you.

15 Salute the brethren that are in La-od-i-ce'-a, and Nym'-phas, and the church that is in their house.

16 And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the La-od-i-ce'-ans; and that ye also read the epistle from La-od-i-ce'-a.

17 And say to Ar-chip'-pus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

18 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving."* (Col. 4: 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 4: 1-6.

### Daily Bible Readings

April 27. M.....	Greetings to Friends (3 John 13, 14)
April 28. T.....	Some Not to Greet! (2 John 9, 10)
April 29. W.....	Greetings to Faithful Workers (Tit. 3: 12-15)
April 30. T.....	Greetings to Priscilla & Aquila (Rom. 16: 1-3)
May 1. F.....	Greetings to Roman Saints (Rom. 16: 5-16)
May 2. S.....	An Elect Sister Greeted (2 John 12, 13)
May 3. S.....	A Greeting by Our Lord (John 1: 46-51)

TIME.—Colossians was written in A.D. 62.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

When we study any part of the Bible, it should be our aim to learn as much as we can about the portion

with which we are concerned, along with its relation to the Bible as a whole. And since we are to deal



with the epistles of Paul throughout this quarter, and the next one, it should be our purpose to become better acquainted with all of the apostles' writings, and especially the relation of the letters to each other, and to the whole group. This lesson will finish our present study of Colossians, and it should not be out of place to look into Paul's reason for writing the letter, and the manner in which it is related to his other letters of that period. This is a fascinating study, and once a person gets in the habit of it, he not only will learn many things which he did not know before; but, and more importantly, he will become a better person as a result of his efforts.

Colossians belongs to a group of four epistles, which are known as the prison epistles. They were written by the apostle Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, the one described in the closing chapter of Acts. The probable order of their writing was Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesian (all written and sent to their destinations at the same time); with Philippians coming at a later date during his stay in the Roman prison. If one will read the first three of these epistles together, he can easily see many links of correction, which bind them together; all of which strongly indicate that they were written about the same time. Tychicus carried both the Colossian and Ephesian letters to their respective churches (Col. 4: 7, 8; Eph. 6: 21, 22); and Onesimus, who was being sent back to Philemon, was Tychicus' travelling companion (Col. 4: 9). Greetings were sent to Philemon and the Colossian brethren by the same group of friends. (See Phile. 23, 24; Col. 4: 10, 12, 14.) We learn from Phile. 2 that a salutation was sent to Archippus; and Col. 4: 17 informs us that this

man maintained a vital connection with the church in Colossae. It is altogether possible that Archippus was the son of Philemon and Apphia, and was what we would call the minister of the church there, which, apparently, met in the home of Philemon. (Phile. 2.)

The church in Colossae was apparently started during Paul's long stay in Ephesus (Acts 19: 8-10); but there does not seem to be anything to indicate that the work was begun by Paul personally (Col. 1: 6, 7; 2: 1; 4: 12, 13). The evidence seems to suggest that the church was planted there by Epaphras. Paul, however, seems to have been kept informed regarding the church in Colossae (Col. 1: 3, 4; 2: 5); and when Epaphras reported to him, in his Roman prison, that the so-called *Colossian Heresy* was making serious inroads on the church there, Paul felt that a letter from him, dealing with that insidious philosophy, was urgently needed. Furthermore, the apostle had converted a run-away slave who belonged to Philemon, one of the Colossian brethren, and felt that he was duty-bound to send him back to his master. (Phile. 8-16.) This called for a personal letter to Philemon, which is a letter to a man, by a man, about a man. But after writing the two letters just referred to, the apostle evidently felt that other churches in the area might be affected by *The Colossian Heresy*, and he, accordingly, wrote the epistle which we know as Ephesians, dealing with the same general subject contained in Colossians, but with a change in emphasis, and upon a somewhat broader foundation; and apparently sent it as a "circular letter" to several churches in the province of Asia.

### The Golden Text

*"Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving."* The same general idea, expressed in the words just quoted, is frequently found in the New Testament. "And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18: 1.) "Continuing steadfastly in prayer." (Rom. 12:

12.) "With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit." (Eph. 6: 18.) "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5: 17.) These passages make it plain that prayer, so far as God's people are concerned, is both universal and continuous. The expression "continue steadfastly" is the translation of a single Greek word, and its mean-

ing can be learned from such passages as Acts 2: 42; 6: 4; 2: 46, where the same original word is found.

It should be obvious to any thoughtful person, that the New Testament does not mean that one should always be engaged in the specific act of prayer, as that expression is commonly understood. If that should be done, then there would be no time for other duties, which the Lord has enjoined upon his people. There should, of course, be regular times for prayer, just as there should be regular times for Bible study and other acts of worship and service; but the question still remains, How does one continue stedfastly in prayer? The two "household-servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him [Cornelius] continually" (Acts 10: 7), not only did that which they were commanded to do; but they also stood in readiness for any order from the centurion. The early disciples spent much time in the temple (Acts 2: 46), but they also had duties at home. Not only did Paul caution the Colossian Christians to continue stedfastly in prayer; he also told them to watch therein with thanksgiving. Lightfoot notes that "long continuance in prayer is apt to produce listlessness. Hence the additional charge that the heart must be *awake*, if the prayer is to have any value."

Prayer has been described a "communion with an Ideal Companion"; and with this view of the question, it is easy to see that prayer is not primarily a matter of our talking, God's listening, and then answering, as is so generally assumed. Prayer, as used in the text now under consideration, is more of an atmosphere, than an act; more of an attitude, than a deed; more of a spirit, than a doing of something. There will be times, of course, when we should let our requests be made known unto God (cf. Phil. 4: 6, 7); but we can hold ourselves in tune with him at all times. We should expose the whole range of our lives to the God who made us; and to endeavor to allow him to express himself through us. One does not always have to be talking to a com-

panion, in order to have fellowship with him.

In the closing part of his book, *Teach Me to Pray*, James DeForest Murch says that the crowning blessing of prayer is fellowship with God through Christ. He then goes on to say, "The more we know about Christ the more we know about God. With the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit to aid us in prayer we come into a precious relationship that is beyond words to describe. In prayer we know the touch of his hand. Depending on him we receive from him understanding and guidance. We learn to trust him when the heart is heavy, when the going is rough, when all is dark ahead. The joy of his companionship shines away the shadows and makes us thankful for all the things of life. He bids our restless spirits be free, yet quiet and balanced in him. He brings out the highest and the best in us and pours into our souls illimitable strength and power. He points out the better things to be and drives us toward their realization. Songs in the night watches turn into anthems of victory. We know God loves us—and that is *everything!* forever!"

If we with earnest effort could succeed  
To make our life one long-connected  
prayer,  
As lives of some perhaps have been  
and are;  
If, never leaving thee, we had no  
heed  
Our wandering spirits back again to  
lead  
Into thy presence, but continued  
there,  
Like angels standing on the highest  
stair  
Of the sapphire throne—this were to  
pray indeed.

But if distractions manifold prevail,  
And if in this we must confess we  
fail,  
Grant us to keep at least a prompt  
desire,  
Continual readiness for prayer and  
praise,  
An altar heaped and waiting to take  
fire  
With the least spark, and leap into a  
blaze.

—Richard Chenivix Trench.

## The Text Explained

### Regarding Tychicus and Onesimus

(Col. 4: 7-9)

*All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for this very purpose, that ye may know our state, and that he may comfort your hearts; together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here.*

Tychicus appears to have been a native, or at least was a citizen at the time of this lesson, of Asia, that is, the province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital and metropolis, who, along with Trophimus, accompanied Paul on his departure from Ephesus, following the uproar which was incited by Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen. (See Acts 20: 1-4.) Paul evidently had Tychicus under consideration as an assistant to Titus in Crete (Tit. 3: 12), but he was later sent to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4: 12). There is no evidence to the effect that Tychicus went to Crete. We do not know how he came to be in Rome, at the time Paul wrote the first three of his four prison epistles; but we do know, as already pointed out, that he was given the responsibility of seeing that they reached their intended destinations. Tychicus was also charged with reporting to the brethren in his homeland the facts regarding the apostle Paul and the condition of the Lord's work in Rome. Tychicus may have gone to the Imperial City to report to Paul on *The Colossian Heresy*.

Attention has also been directed to the fact that Tychicus was given the added responsibility of accompanying Onesimus back to his master in Colossae, that is, to Philemon. It is generally assumed, based on the information we have in Paul's letter to Philemon, that Onesimus, who apparently belonged to Philemon, left his master, and had for some reason ended up in Rome. We do not know just how he came in contact with Paul, in the latter's prison house (Acts 28: 30, 31), but it is evident from Paul's letter to Philemon, that Onesimus was con-

verted to Christ by Paul while the latter was in prison (Phile. 10-12). It would have pleased the aged apostle, if Onesimus could have remained in Rome with him; but he knew that his new son in the faith, in fulfillment of his Christian duty, must return to his master, and make things right with him. This is a lesson which we cannot afford to overlook or ignore. Paul, accordingly, sent Onesimus back to Colossae, evidently in company with and under the escort of Tychicus, who also carried the letter which the apostle had written to Philemon.

Although Paul was himself bound in prison, he felt that it was his duty, as well as his privilege, to comfort the hearts of the brethren in Colossae; and he had charged both Tychicus and Onesimus to express his feelings to the Colossian brethren and others in that general area. The Colossian saints would, of course, be distressed because of Paul's imprisonment in Rome; but it is easy to gather from the letter which Paul wrote to them, that they, too, needed encouragement. If one will read all of Paul's epistles, it will be easy for him to see that the apostle, regardless of his own condition, was always ready and willing to do what he could to encourage and help others. This was true, even in the final days of his life, as may be seen by reading 2 Timothy, which, apparently, was written a short time before his death, and while he was lingering in a musty dungeon.

### Salutations and Special Messages

(Col. 4: 10-17)

*Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (touching whom ye received commandments; if he come unto you, receive him), and Jesus that is called Justus, who are of the circumcision: these only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort unto me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you,*

and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you. Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

Bible students are not agreed as to whether or not Aristarchus was an actual prisoner, as Paul was, in Rome; there is simply no definite information on the subject. We do know, however, that he was a long-time friend and companion of Paul, and that he was arrested, along with Gaius, during the Ephesian riot (Acts 19: 29); and that he left the city, in company with Paul, when the tumult had subsided (Acts 20: 4). Aristarchus may have continued on to Jerusalem with Paul, and may have remained there and in Caesarea, during Paul's confinement in those two cities. He is specifically mentioned as a passenger on the ship, when Paul, Luke, and others embarked for Rome (Acts 27: 2); but not necessarily as a prisoner.

The next mention of Aristarchus is in Phile. 23, 24 and in verse 10 of the section of the lesson text now under consideration. Lightfoot suggests that the most probable solution of the question regarding the status of Aristarchus, is "that his relations with St. Paul in Rome excited suspicion and led to a temporary confinement. Another possible hypothesis is that he voluntarily shared the apostle's captivity by living with him." Vincent, on the other hand, notes that "unnecessary difficulty is made over the fact that the term *fellow-prisoner* is applied to Epaphras in Phile. 23, and not to Aristarchus; while here the case is reversed. It is not necessary to suppose that the two had changed places, or that the captivity was voluntary, if a literal captivity was meant. All the three terms—*fellow-prisoner*, *fellow-servant*, *fellow-worker*—might be applied to both; and, as Dwight remarks, 'Rea-

sons unknown to us may easily have determined the use of one word or the other, independently of the question as to the particular time when they were in imprisonment.' "

Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, is the man who defected on the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas, and thereby incurred Paul's displeasure, and who flatly refused to allow him to accompany them on the proposed second such journey. Barnabas, however, wanted the younger man to go; and after he and Paul decided to go their separate ways, Barnabas and Mark set out together. (Read Acts 15: 36-41.) Paul probably felt that the "rift" between him and Barnabas, who, as we have already seen, was a relative of Mark, might cause some of Paul's friends to be prejudiced against Mark. But Paul wanted the Colossian brethren to know that Mark was again in full fellowship with him, and that they should treat him accordingly. Either Paul or some one else had already written the brethren in Colossae regarding Mark, and he wanted them therefore to treat him as a faithful brother in Christ.

The name "Jesus," in the Greek, is the same as *Joshua*, in the Hebrew. (Cf. Heb. 4: 8; Acts 7: 45; King James and American Standard Versions.) The term "Justus" was a surname, commonly borne by Jews and Jewish proselytes; and probably indicated something of their character. (Cf. Acts 1: 23; 18: 7.) Paul's comment regarding Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus Justus, *men of the circumcision*: "These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God," approaches, if it doesn't actually reach, the pensive. There were other Jewish Christians in Rome (cf. Rom. 16: 3ff); but it is evident from Paul's remark here, that they had nothing to do with his work with reference to the kingdom of God. The apostle's words are a clear indication of his loneliness, as he did all he could to reach all men with the gospel of Christ. It is interesting to note that the term "comfort," in verse 11, is from *parēgoria*, the word from which we have our *paregoric*—a soothing medication which alleviates pain. The

original word occurs nowhere else in the Greek New Testament.

It was pointed out earlier in these studies in Colossians, that Epaphras was, in all probability, the man who actually planted the church in Colossae; and it is fair to assume that he did the same thing in Laodicea and Hierapolis. It would be difficult to find a more succinct biographical statement regarding any one, than the remark which Paul penned concerning Epaphras, namely, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. For I bear him witness, that he hath much labor for you, and for them in Laodicea, and for them in Hierapolis." The title "servant (*doulos*—marginal note, *bondservant*) of Christ Jesus," which Paul frequently used with reference to himself, is applied to no other Christian worker by him, except Epaphras (Col. 4: 12) and Timothy (Phil. 1: 1); and only once each to these two associates in the gospel of Christ. This should give us some idea of the exceptional service, which was rendered by Epaphras.

The names of Luke and Demas appear in the same context, wherever the name of the latter occurs. "Demas, Luke, my fellow-workers" (Phile. 24); "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas salute you" (Col. 4: 14); "Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; . . . Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4: 10, 11). The case of Demas illustrates one of the common occurrences in life, namely, a fine beginning, but a poor and unworthy ending. It makes little difference how auspicious one's beginning may be, it will avail nothing in human life, without a good ending. This does not necessarily imply an ending which the world calls good; but one which is pleasing in the sight of God. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 9; 2: 20-22.) Even the sinless life of the Lord Jesus Christ himself could have been ruined in the garden of Gethsemane, if he had not been faithful to his Father. (Cf. Matt. 26: 36-46.) And with these things in mind, it would be well for each one of us to ask ourselves, How

do our present actions and prospective ending compare with the beginning of our Christian experience?

If we accept the fact that Luke, the beloved physician, was the author of the gospel record which bears his name, and the Book of Acts, then we meet with him for the first time, As Paul and his company of missionaries reached the city of Troas, as set forth in Acts 16: 6-10. The missionary group, up to this point, was referred to in the third person; but the introduction of the famous "we" passages of the inspired record, clearly identifies Luke with them. Luke accompanied the missionaries to Philippi, and was associated with them in the work of planting the cause of Christ in that city. (Acts 16: 11-18.) This was during Paul's second missionary journey.

After their work in Philippi Paul and his group left the city, but Luke remained behind, as may be gathered from the use of the third person, in referring to the departing missionaries. (Acts 16: 35-17: 1ff.) And then, some years later, as Paul was concluding his third missionary journey, and was on his way to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor saints of that area, he passed through Philippi; and it is interesting to observe from the use of the pronoun "we," that Luke joined Paul's company, and went on with them to Jerusalem. (Acts 20: 5-21: 17.) And inasmuch as Luke went with Paul from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27: 1, 2; 28: 16), it is altogether possible that he remained with him during his two years in Jerusalem and Caesarea. There are, in fact, some good reasons for thinking that Luke left his medical practice in Philippi, in order to become Paul's personal physician and a writer of gospel truth.

#### Autographic Salutation and Benediction

(Col. 4: 18)

*The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.* Paul made it his practice, beginning with at least 2 Thessalonians, to write the salutation of his epistles with his own hand. (2 Thess. 3: 17; cf. 2: 1, 2.) He usually employed a "letter-

writer" (amanuensis) for the remainder of the epistle. (Cf. Rom. 16: 22.) The letter which Paul wanted the Colossian brethren to receive from Laodicea, and to read, has (1) either been lost, or (2), and more probable, it was a copy of the so-called circular letter which was

sent to the churches in that area, of which our "Ephesians" is also a copy. The apostle simply wanted both letters—the one to the Colossians, and the one sent to the Laodiceans—read in both churches. The Colossians would receive the letter *from* Laodicea.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What over-all plan should people employ in Bible study, especially the epistles of Paul?

What place in his writings does the letter to the Colossians occupy?

When and under what circumstances was the church in Colossae probably started?

Why, apparently, did Paul write the first three of his prison epistles?

### The Golden Text

In what way did Paul emphasize the opening words of the golden text of today's lesson?

What does it mean to continue steadfastly in prayer?

What is the basic meaning of prayer and what are some of its outstanding blessings?

### Regarding Tychicus and Onesimus

Who was Tychicus and what are some of the facts which are known of him?

What specific instructions did he have from Paul at the time of this lesson?

Who was Onesimus and how does he fit into the picture now before us?

Why did Paul feel that it was essential for Onesimus to return to Colossae; and what important lesson is there in this for us?

Why did Paul feel that he should encourage the Colossian brethren?

### Salutations and Special Messages

Who was Aristarchus and in what way

was he related to Paul at the time of this lesson?

Why did Paul feel that it was necessary to write the Colossians regarding Mark?

Who was Jesus Justus and what was his place in the lesson now before us?

In what way did Paul indicate his loneliness in his work on behalf of the kingdom of God?

Discuss the special significance of Paul's use of the term for "comfort," as used by him with reference to the three Jewish brethren whom he mentioned.

How did the apostle indicate his high regard for Epaphras?

In what way are the names of Demas and Luke related in Paul's writings?

What special lesson does Demas have for us?

Under what circumstances is Luke first introduced to Bible readers?

What reasons do we have for thinking that his home was in Philippi?

Why, apparently, did Luke leave Philippi, and where did he go from there?

Why is it thought that he probably remained with Paul during his stay in Caesarea?

What did he probably do during those two years? (Cf. Luke 1: 1-4; Acts 1: 1f.)

Why would Paul want to refer to Luke as the beloved physician?

### Autographic Salutation and Benediction

What practice characterized Paul with reference to the letters he sent out?

What was the probable reason for this?

What instruction did Paul give regarding the letter he sent to the Colossians?

What may have been the letter "from" Laodicea, and why did he want them both read in both churches?

## Lesson VI—May 10, 1970

# PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

## Lesson Text

### 1 Thess 1: 1-10

1 Paul, and Sil-va'-nus, and Tim'-o'-thy, unto the church of the Thessa-lo'-ni-ans in God the Father and Lord Je'-sus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love

and patience of hope in our Lord Je'-sus Christ, before our God and Father;

4 Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election,

5 How that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed our-

selves toward you for your sake.

6 And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit;

7 So that ye became an ensample to all that believed in Mac-e-do-ni-a and in A-cha'-ia,

8 For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord not only in Mac-e-do-ni-a and A-cha'-ia, but in every place your faith to God-ward

is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything.

9 For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God,

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Je'-sus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas.*” (Acts 17: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 17: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

May 4.	M.....	Paul in Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-4)
May 5.	T.....	Persecution in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1: 5-10)
May 6.	W.....	Suffering With Christ (Rom. 12: 8-17)
May 7.	T.....	Suffering Predicted (1 Thess. 3: 1-9)
May 8.	F.....	Hope for the Persecuted (1 Pet. 5: 5-11)
May 9.	S.....	Example of Suffering (James 5: 1-10)
May 10.	S.....	Fellowship With Christ (Phil. 3: 1-10)

TIME.—First Thessalonians was written in the period of A.D. 50-52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

Introduction

The city of Thessalonica was anciently called *Therma*, or *Therme*, the name having been derived from the hot springs which were found in that community. Cassander rebuilt the city in 315 B.C., and renamed it for his wife, Thessalonica, the daughter of Philip of Macedon, and sister of Alexander the Great. Thessalonica was strongly fortified, and, situated as it was on the Thermaic gulf, it soon became the most important harbor in Macedonia. The city became the capital of one of the four districts into which Macedonia was divided during the days of the Romans; and then later on when the four districts were united into one, Thessalonica became the metropolis of the whole. Furthermore, the city, due to its strategic location, was made into a strong naval base. It became the headquarters of Pompey, during the first Civil War; and because it favored the side of Octavius and Antony, in their struggle with Brutus and Cassius, it was rewarded by being made a free city of the empire.

The record of the origin of the

church in Thessalonica furnishes the setting for the golden text for today's lesson, and we shall consider that phase of the subject, when we reach that point. It appears very evident that 1 Thessalonians was Paul's first letter; if he wrote any such epistle before he penned this one, we have no information regarding it. Paul always had a reason for writing the letters which he sent out, and this one, of course, is no exception. The church in Thessalonica was very young, and when it seemed that they needed Paul's wise counsel and leadership most, he and Silas were compelled to flee the city, because of persecution. (Cf. Matt. 10: 23.) The movements of Paul were rather rapid for the next several weeks, until he reached the city of Corinth, where he was permitted to remain for some eighteen months. (See Acts 18: 9-11.)

The apostle Paul made repeated efforts to return to Thessalonica, but was hindered by Satan. (1 Thess. 2: 17, 18.) He did, however, succeed in sending Timothy unto them (1 Thess. 3: 1-5), but it appears that Paul had no direct word from the

young church, until Silas and Timothy overtook him in Corinth. (See Acts 18: 5.) The good report which Timothy brought to Paul filled the latter with unbounding joy; and it appears that he wrote his first letter to the young church almost immediately. "But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you;

for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith." (1 Thess. 3: 6-10.)

### The Golden Text

*"And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas."* The missionary activities of Paul and Silas in Philippi were brought to an abrupt end, when they were jailed, following the casting out of the demon from the maid who had been following them, and testifying as to their identity and work, with the exception of that which they did with reference to the conversion of the jailor and his household. (Acts 16: 16-34.) After a night in the custody of the prison-keeper, the officials of the city sent word to the effect that the missionary-prisoners should be set free; but Paul promptly refused their offer, lest their cause should be adversely affected by the unfavorable publicity, until the magistrates themselves came in person to bring them out. Those officials complied with the prisoners' demand, and apparently did so gladly, when they learned that Paul and Silas were uncondemned Roman citizens, at the time they were cast into prison by their orders. That which the magistrates did at the place of imprisonment was, for all practical purposes, a public apology for the disgraceful treatment which they had inflicted upon Paul and Silas. (Read Acts 16: 35-40.)

The record is not clear, as to the movements of Timothy, at the time Paul and Silas left Philippi. He may have gone with them; but if he remained in Philippi with Luke, then it is evident that he caught up with the older men in either Thessalonica or Beroea. (See Acts 17: 14.) The route which the missionaries took from Philippi, was the great Roman road, the Egnatian Way, which connected the East with

the West; and it led them through Amphipolis, Apollonia, and on to Thessalonica, about one hundred miles southwest of Philippi. The inspired historian says, "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: and Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. And some of them were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." (Acts 17: 1-4.)

The expression "were persuaded" (*epeisthēsan*, first aorist passive indicative or *peithō*) means that they were convinced of the truthfulness of that which Paul preached; and that they believed and accepted it. (Cf. Luke 16: 31, where the same original word is found.) The words "consorted with" (*proseklērōthesan*, first aorist passive indicative of *proskeērōō*) mean, basically, to join be allotted to, be attached or assigned to. As used in the passage now under consideration, the expression means that they were added to the same body of people, with whom Paul and Silas were identified, that is, the church. (1 Thess. 2: 13; cf. Acts 2: 47.) It was in this way that the church of the Lord in Thessalonica came into being. It is interesting to note that the original term for "consorted with" occurs nowhere else in the



New Testament. (The aorist is a tense of the Greek verb, denoting that the action took place in the unspecified past, with no implication of continuance or repetition. Thus, the Thessalonian Christians became members of the church only once, and the context makes plain the

precise time of its occurrence.) The remainder of the paragraph in Acts 17 (verses 5-9) tells something of the persecution, to which the infant church in Thessalonica was subjected; and which forced Paul and Silas to leave them to their tormentors.

### The Text Explained

#### Address and Greeting

(1 Thess. 1:1)

*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.*

The modern city of Thessalonica is called *Salonica* or *Saloniki*, and its population is a little over two hundred and seventeen thousand people. The inhabitants of the city, during Paul's day, apparently were a mixture of Greeks, Romans, and Jews. It is fair to assume that there was not a sufficient number of Jewish people in Philippi to support a synagogue, and it was for that reason that Lydia and the other women held their sabbath meetings on the river bank, without the city limits. It is also quite likely that there was no synagogue of the Jews in either Amphipolis or Apollonia, since Paul and his company passed through them, apparently without stopping; but when they reached Thessalonica, they found a synagogue of the Jews, which furnished them a good place to begin their work of preaching the gospel of Christ. (Cf. Acts 13:46.)

As one reads through the Book of Acts, it is easy for him to see just how the early disciples went about establishing churches. Paul began his work in Philippi, as we have already seen, on the bank of a river, and speaking only to the women who had gathered there for worship. And then, a few days later, we find him in a Jewish synagogue proclaiming the gospel to all who were willing to hear. The synagogue meetings were primarily for Jews, but it is clear from the record that the meetings were *also* attended by others. Paul took advantage of the opportunity which was afforded him, and proclaimed Christ to the assembled hearers.

*It is interesting to note that the church is referred to as "the church*

*of the Thessalonians," or, literally, the church composed of Thessalonians. There is no article before "Thessalonians." The term "church" means the called out, and in the case now before us simply has reference to those people of Thessalonica, who had heeded the call of the Lord through the gospel, and were separated, from the others of the city, unto him. The ones who made up the church were "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The salutation combines the Greek (grace) with the Hebrew of Jewish (peace), according to Vincent. The names of Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are linked with Paul's in the salutation, probably because of their part in founding and encouraging the church in Thessalonica; but it is quite evident that they had nothing to do with the actual writing of the epistle.*

#### Paul's Feelings for the Thessalonians and His Reasons for Them

(1 Thess. 1:2-7)

*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father; knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election, how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.*

*It is only when one realizes the lost condition of people, that he can experience real joy and thanksgiving at their conversion and salvation*

in Christ. So far as the record goes, there was not a single Christian in Thessalonica when Paul and his company entered the city; but when he and Silas were forced to leave because of the persecution which the unbelieving Jews waged against them and the infant church, they were able to leave behind them a fairly large group of obedient believers. (Cf. Acts 17: 4.) Paul was not one of those preachers who apparently is more or less satisfied, when he has baptized people; that was but the beginning of his interest in the people of the Lord in Thessalonica. It will not avail anything just to see people baptized into Christ, unless they remain faithful to the Lord until death removes them from this world.

As Paul was expressing his thanks for the Thessalonian Christians, and praying for them, he expressed his feelings for them in relation to three of the great cardinal graces of the New Testament, namely, faith, love, and hope. (Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 13; 1 Thess. 5: 8; Col. 1: 4, 5.) The faith of the people to whom Paul was writing was not a dead faith (cf. James 2: 14-26), but one which was active in the service of the Lord, and in the salvation of their souls. Not only did their faith put them to work; their labors were motivated by love (see Rev. 2: 4); and their hope, which securely anchored them to Christ, resulted in their being steadfast in all their trials and tribulations (2 Pet. 1: 5-11; Rev. 21: 8). This is the kind of relationship which is pleasing to the Father and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason for Paul's thankfulness for the Thessalonian Christians, his intercessory prayer on their behalf, and his remembrance of them, is stated in these words: "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." The doctrine of election is a fundamental Bible subject; and there are three distinct applications of the term revealed in the Scriptures, namely, (1) with reference to nations who were chosen by God for the possession of special privileges, and for the performance of specific duties, as for example, Israel (Ex. 19: 3-6); the Assyrians (Isa. 10: 5-7); the Chaldeans (Hab. 1: 5-11); the church (1 Pet. 2: 9); (2) with reference to individuals who were

chosen for a particular office or work: Cyrus (Isa. 44: 18); Paul (Acts 9: 15); (3) with reference to individuals who are chosen to be children of God, and heirs of salvation (Eph. 1: 3-14).

It is with regard to the choosing or the election in the third sense, that religious controversies have been frequent, and at times fierce and bitter. This field of controversy, broadly speaking, has been divided into two opposing groups, popularly known as *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, named after two theologians of the sixteenth century. Those of the former group hold that the election of the individual to salvation, is absolute and unconditional; while those of the latter persuasion contend that the election is conditional. The question of election to salvation is, as already pointed out, a Bible subject; and people today, of course, should be vitally interested in it. This is especially true, because of that which the New Testament says on the subject. But those who endeavor to speak as the Bible speaks, do not want to be classified as either Calvinists or Arminians. They do, however, hold one thing in common with the latter, namely, they believe that the election is conditional; but they differ with most Arminians on what the conditions are.

The term "election," as used by Paul, as Vincent notes, refers to God's selection or "men or agencies for special missions or attainments; but neither here nor elsewhere in the New Testament is there any warrant for the revolting doctrine that God has predestined a definite number of mankind to eternal life, and the rest to eternal destruction. The sense in this passage appears to be defined by the succeeding context." The exact method by which people are elected to salvation, is set forth by Paul in these words: "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14; cf. 1 Pet. 1: 1, 22; Eph. 1: 13; Acts 2: 37-41.)

In the words of Harold J. Ockenga, "Paul spoke of their having evidence of their election by saying, 'Knowing your election.' His knowledge of their election came from what he had seen and heard among them. They had responded affirmatively to the Word of God, they had brought forth fruit in faith, love, and hope, and they had assurance in their hearts. Thus they knew that they were the elect of God. The clue Paul gives to the reason for such election is the love of God. Their being chosen did not originate with themselves but with God, God's grace which is God's love in action. A love which gave Christ and spared him not is the love which chose us to be in Christ. Thus the growth of the church rested on the unmerited love of divine grace which is extended to men in Christ."

It is relatively easy to get the New Testament idea of just what Christianity is from that which is stated in verses 5-7, of the lesson text now under consideration: "how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia." Christ is obviously the central truth in Christianity; for it was he who founded the system, and who gives all instruction regarding it. We can therefore, as we try to give a practical application of the principle of the religion of the Lord, say, Christianity is believing that which the Bible says about Christ; it is contact with him; and it is living as he directs that we should.

### The Reaction of a Dedicated Church

(1 Thess. 1: 8-10)

*For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia. but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto*

*you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.*

The Greek term from which we have "hath sounded forth" (*exēcheō*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The idea is that of a loud, unmistakable proclamation of the gospel of salvation. The Thessalonian Christians, in a relatively short time, had become, as it were, a sounding board or a radio transmitting station, to use a modern expression. Ellicott notes that it marks forcibly "both the clear and the persuasive nature of the *logos tou Kurion*" (the word of the Lord). Robertson calls it a graphic picture, with a pardonable touch of hyperbole (Moffatt); for Thessalonica was a great commercial and political centre for disseminating the news of salvation, on the Egnation Way.

The faith of the newly converted Christians in Thessalonica took a definite direction, as it put them to work. They had hitherto served idols, but now they had become the bondservants of the true God; and this fact had become so widespread, that it had become the subject of conversation, wherever the name of the Lord was honored in that section of the Roman Empire. That which happened in Thessalonica is nothing short of amazing, when we think of the suffering through which those people had to pass, in changing their allegiance from idols to God; but they were equal to the occasion, and let their joy be known to all men. This is an example of that which Jesus means, when he urged his disciples to let their light shine; so that others might see their good works, and glorify their Father in heaven. (Matt. 5: 14-16.)

That which the young church in Thessalonica did is but a demonstration of the inevitable effect when people are saved from their sins. They had been taught what their true condition was, a? they served idols; and they were also told what their status was in the service and care of the living God. Their faith was genuine, and it was tempered by faithful apostolic

teaching, so that they made known to others the source of their salvation, and called upon them to accept it. (Cf. Rev. 22: 17.) This was an example of missionary work, which not only caught the eye of others, but also made them want to tell about it too. The influence of the Thessalonian church spread far beyond its own city, and its immediate territory.

Christianity must be taught (cf. Matt. 28: 19, 20; Acts 2: 42), but there is also a sense in which it is "caught." For example, if a church becomes strong, it will strengthen others; if it is weak and indifferent, it will have a similar effect on others; and if it is spiritually awake, manifesting those spiritual qualities which are pleasing to the Lord, others will be inspired to greater things. This was the kind of influence which issued forth from the newly established church in Thessalonica. Their faith was known in every place. The Lord has ordained that the church be the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3: 15), and any one who wants to study the

basic principles of genuine missionary work, can find them amplified in the work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope, of the Thessalonian Christians.

The Christian life which we are now considering, is indeed a consecrated life—a life set aside unto the Lord. (Cf. Heb. 12: 14.) The three verbs in the expression "how ye *turned* unto God from idols, *to serve* a living and true God, and *to wait* for his Son from heaven" may be regarded as a practical definition of what it means to be a Christian. Those who become the Lord's people must turn from something to something (cf. Col. 1: 13); they must serve in their new relationship (see Rom. 6: 17, 18); and they must wait for the Lord (cf. Tit. 2: 11-14). Those who have turned to God may, in the words of Frances Havergal, humbly cry,

O use me, Lord, use even me,  
Just as thou wilt, and when and where;  
Until thy blessed face I see,  
Thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

### 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 pertinent facts which are known about the city of Thessalonica?

Under what circumstances did Paul begin the writing of his letters which has come down to us?

What are the principal facts regarding Paul's initial work in the city of Thessalonica?

What prompted Paul to write his first letter to the Thessalonian Christians?

#### The Golden Text

How did Paul and his company come to visit Thessalonica?

What possible reason can you give for their passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia?

How did Paul begin his work in Thessalonica?

Discuss the results which followed his efforts.

#### Address and Greeting

Why did Paul usually begin his preaching in a Jewish synagogue?

Show how the early Christians went about establishing churches.

In what way did Paul refer to the church in Thessalonica?

What is the meaning of the term "church"?

Who joined Paul in the salutation to the church in Thessalonica and why?

Paul's Feelings for the Thessalonians and His Reasons for Them

Under what circumstances can people ex-

perience real joy and thanksgiving for the salvation of others?

Why was Paul so greatly interested in the Christians in Thessalonica?

What three cardinal graces did he refer to in his letter to them?

What reason lay behind his thanksgiving for them?

What does the Bible teach regarding God's election?

In what way did the election of the Thessalonian Christians take place?

What evidence did Paul have of their election?

In what way did the Christians in Thessalonica demonstrate the meaning of Christianity?

#### The Reaction of a Dedicated Church

What did the newly formed church in Thessalonica do about making the word known to others?

What is the basic meaning of "hath sounded forth"?

What motivated those Christians in their missionary efforts?

Why does the faith of a genuine believer always put him to work?

What impression did the faith of the Thessalonian believers make on others?

What important teaching of Jesus did they illustrate?

What always happens when people are really aware that they have been saved from sin?

Why is Christianity a "taught" religion?

In what sense may it be "caught"?

What is the church's obligation regarding the truth?

Give a practical definition of the Christian life.

# Lesson VII—May 17, 1970

## PAUL COMMENDS THE THESSALONIANS

### Lesson Text

#### 1 Thess. 2: 10-20

10 Ye are witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe:

11 As ye know how we *dealt with* each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging *you*, and testifying.

12 To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.

13 And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted it not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Ju-dae'-a in Christ Je'-sus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they

did of the Jews;

15 Who both killed the Lord Je'-sus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men;

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gen'-tiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

17 But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire:

18 Because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Je'-sus at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and our joy.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“We preached unto you the gospel of God.” (1 Thess. 2: 9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 2: 1-9.

### Daily Bible Readings

May 11.	M.....	Growth in Grace (2 Pet. 1: 1-8)
May 12.	T.....	Hindrances to Growth (1 Cor. 3: 1-9)
May 13.	W.....	Unity Through Growth (Eph. 4: 11-16)
May 14.	T.....	Way of the Righteous (Prov. 4: 10-19)
May 15.	F.....	Fruit of Righteousness (James 3: 13-19)
May 16.	S.....	Sufferings of Paul (2 Cor. 1: 1-6)
May 17.	S.....	Suffering as a Christian (1 Pet. 4: 12-19)

TIME.—First Thessalonians was written in the period of A.D. 50-52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

One is sometimes made to wonder if Paul, while preaching the gospel in Europe and planting churches in the various provinces of the empire of Rome, ever stopped to think of his experience back in Asia, as he endeavored to evangelize the area in that part of the Roman world. It is practically certain that he never thought, at that time, that he would soon be preaching on another continent; but he had long since learned

to trust in the providence of God, and was always willing to go wherever he might be called. He doubtless thought, at the time he was passing through the provinces of Western Asia Minor, that there was more to be done there, than he and his colleagues in the gospel could possibly do; but after the new world, with all of its possibilities for gospel preaching, was opened up to them, they pressed the battle

with all the zeal and determination they possessed.

There were Jews in many of the places where Paul preached, and they knew what it meant to serve the true and living God; but with the Gentiles it was another matter. They had been used to idols and idol worship; and when they forsook that kind of a relationship, it was essential that they adjust themselves to a different environment altogether. They would, in many instances, encounter opposition from their own people, as well as from the civil rulers of their respective provinces; but what must have been especially distressing to them 'was the persecution which they received from the Jewish people—the very people who claimed to be the chosen people of Jehovah. Paul was set apart to a ministry among the Gentiles; and it is a recorded fact that both he, and those whom he converted to Christ from heathenism, were continuously denounced and ill-treated by the apostle's own brethren in the flesh, the Jews. This was particularly true in the case of Paul, Silas, and the Thessa-

lonian brethren, as may be seen by reading Acts 17, and the letter from which the lesson text is taken.

The selection of scripture which serves as the devotional reading for today should be carefully read; and when that is done in connection with the entire lesson text, it can easily be seen that Paul's method of encouraging the persecuted church, was to recite the facts under which they heard, believed, and accepted the gospel message. Both the preachers and the people to whom they preached were shamefully treated by the unbelieving Jews, and that made it necessary for all of them to suffer together. But Paul's primary purpose was not to emphasize the suffering which they were enduring, but rather to get his brethren to see that it could have a wholesome effect upon them. They were in the process of building Christian character, and hardships could be turned into a kind of fire which would have the effect of removing the dross from their lives. (Cf. Acts 14: 22; 1 Thess. 3: 3; 2 Tim. 3: 12; 1 Pet. 4: 12, 13.)

### The Golden Text

*"We preached unto you the gospel of God."* Although the gospel is variously referred to as "the gospel" (Rom. 1: 16), "my gospel" (1 Tim. 2: 8), "our gospel" (2 Thess. 2: 14), "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15: 19), and "the gospel of God" (2 Cor. 11: 7), it is always the same gospel message—it all comes from God. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18.) It is interesting to note that in the devotional reading alone, reference is made three times to "the gospel of God" all of which points to the monotheistic character of the gospel. The reference to the gospel of God appears to have been especially appropriate, in addressing the Gentiles of Thessalonica, who had so lately "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." (1 Thess. 1: 9.) Paul refers to "the gospel of Christ" in 1 Thess. 3: 2. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 8.)

The term "gospel" literally means *good news or glad tidings*; and one of the clearest statements of this literal meaning of the gospel to be found anywhere, is in Luke 2: 10,

11, namely, "And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David's Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The good news or glad tidings regarding Christ, has reference to that which was done by and through him for the salvation of lost men and women, boys, and girls. Mankind had sinned to the extent that not a single righteous person lived upon the earth (cf. Rom. 3: 9, 23; Gal. 3: 22), when Jesus came to make the salvation of the race possible. All sinners deserve to be punished, and they were and are in a lost condition; but, in the fulness of time (Gal. 4: 3-5), God, in love and mercy, offered pardon to all who would accept it (cf. Eph. 2: 8, 9; Tit. 3: 3-7).

The gospel of Christ, or of God, reduced to its basic elements, is not a statement of principles; it is, instead, a record of facts—a record of

things which actually took place in this world of ours. The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15: 1-4; cf. Gal. 1: 11, 12; 1 Thess. 4.) It is because of the great sacrifice on the part of Christ, and his triumphant resurrection from the dead, that God is able to offer salvation to all who will accept the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Read Rom. 3: 21-26.)

## The Text Explained

### Apostolic Motives and Conduct

(1 Thess. 2: 10-12)

*Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblamably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe: and ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.*

The section of the lesson text just quoted, is a continuation of Paul's apology for the course which he and his fellow workers followed in preaching the gospel in Thessalonica. He wanted to make clear to them their motives, and in so doing he gave a careful review of their work among those who were converted to Christ. This was essential because of the savage attacks which the local Jews and unbelieving pagans made on the preachers and the young church. A. S. Peake thinks that Paul and his company were charged with being wandering sophists, who were making money out of their followers. The character of the assaults which were made by the opposition may be seen by reading Acts 17: 5-9. Verse 5 says, "But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering, a crowd, set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people."

The presence and service of "certain vile fellows of the rabble," meant that Paul and his company would be classed, by them, "with the minstrels, magicians, astrologers, charlatans, and quacks of the day," and that they practiced immorality

as the heathen priests did in Corinth, in connection with the polytheistic religions of that day and time; and that being religious charlatans, they sought to profit by the gifts of their poor deluded followers. Although the charges were false in every detail, Paul felt that he could not let them stand unanswered; because of the effect which he felt they might have on the young Christians there. And so, in his answer to the falsehoods, he called to the attention of the brethren in Thessalonica their manner of life among them, the message which they preached, and the motives which inspired their preaching and general behavior among them.

The principles which underlay Paul's answer to the charges made against him and his fellow-workers, are still relevant to our day. This is true because attitudes toward the gospel and its proclaimers are still unfavorable, although they differ in both time and place, as any careful observer knows. There are gospel preachers and missionaries who labor under substantially the same conditions, which characterized Paul and his companions; and they, of course, should endeavor to react as Paul did. But the overwhelming majority of such Christian workers are not confronted with such open and physical violence; but their opposition is more subtle and deadly in its nature. But whatever the nature of the opposition, the Lord's people should see to it that their attitude and conduct toward the forces of evil, are motivated by Christian principles. Paul's purpose at all times was to display a character which was unmistakably Christian in its nature, and which no reasonable person could find fault with.

(See 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12; 3: 16; cf. 2 Thess. 3: 1, 2.) A holy, righteous, and unblamable life, is the most effective answer to critics today, just as it was in the days of Paul.

It should also be noticed that Paul took great care to manifest the proper attitude toward the brethren who had been converted to Christ. Most people understand the need for diligent care for newly born infants, according to the flesh; and that should be sufficient to impress upon church leaders, something of the care which they should show for those who are converted to Christ. Not only should they have the proper food (cf. 1 Pet. 2: 2; 1 Cor. 3: 2); they also need to have the sense of belonging, and that they have a vital role in the work of the Lord.

It appears that there are too many preachers and other church leaders who are interested in baptizing people, and after that they have little or no contact with them. Those who are converted to Christ should be encouraged to start the pathway toward heaven in a way which will please the Lord.

#### A Demonstration of Genuine Faith

(1 Thess. 2: 13-16)

*And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost.*

It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul made no distinction between the spoken and written word of God: when Paul preached, his message was the word of God; and when he wrote out his message, that too was God's word. Later on, when he wrote to the Corinthians, he said, "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.) This was another way of saying that the inspired message was lodged, as it were, in the apostles. (Cf. Gal. 1: 11, 12, 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19). Later on, when the revelation was recorded by inspired men, then we have, in book form, or, in the Holy Scriptures, that which was at first in the men (earthen vessels) who were chosen of God to make known to the people of this age God's will for them.

The first verse of this section of the lesson text touches upon a very fundamental issue, namely, why we regard the Bible as being different from all other books which have ever been published. It is our only standard for effective living—the ultimate and supreme authority for faith and conduct. Not only is the Bible such an authoritative record, we also learn something of why it is characterized by such authority. It is true that there is no reference here to the Bible, as such; but we are taught that what was spoken and written by such men as Paul, is from God. He called his own preaching the word of God, just as we call that which is in the Bible the word of God. Or, to state the same thing in another way, we take that which Paul says here as typical of the whole; and what was true of this apostle, is also true of all the others who wrote that which is in the entire New Testament. And we know from Paul's letter to Timothy that the same thing is also true of the Old Testament Scriptures. (Read 2 Tim. 3: 14-17.)

The Interpreter's Bible points out that the Thessalonians who accepted Paul's message, did not engage in any "long hairsplitting and doubt-filled questioning" regarding that which Paul preached to them: they simply accepted it as the word of God, and not as the word of men. And it is easy to see that true spiritual life began to manifest itself in their hearts and lives. Theirs was a vital religion, and it surged in and through them with such vigor, that Paul again and again broke into a paean of thanksgiving. When the word of God is allowed to remain in one's heart, its effect is going to be seen in the life of that person. (Cf.



Psalm 119: 11; Col. 1: 9-12; Phil. 2: 12, 13.)

As the people who accept the Scriptures as the word of God, and continue to gain a knowledge of that which is taught therein, they will give their assent to it, with the result that a commitment of their lives will be made to the truth as they learn it. This is the practical meaning of growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Read 2 Pet. 3: 14-18.) Paul went on to point out to the newly converted Christians in Thessalonica, that they had become imitators of their Jewish brethren in Judaea. Both had suffered tremendously at the hands of their country men, who refused to heed the message and accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. The contrast between the group who accepted the gospel message, and those who refused it, is very great. The one was teachable, while the other was not.

The principle which is involved in that which has just been said, was emphasized by Jesus himself, during his personal ministry. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." (John 7: 17.) Here we have the idea of character before conduct; or, the proper attitude of heart and mind, as one approaches the Scriptures, before he acts with reference to that which is before him. If one is in sympathy with, that is, if he really wants to know that which God said, then he will be in position to recognize that the teaching before him is really from above. The apostle Paul, after pointing out the proper course for one to pursue, says, "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." (Phil. 3: 15-16.)

No one can get the full force of the lesson text now under consideration, if he does not recognize the absolute need for manifesting the proper attitude toward the word of God. It is life for those who maintain the proper attitude; while death is the certain lot of those who fail to do so. If one has the right kind of attitude, he will continue to

search the Scriptures for that which God wants him to do; but if he does not manifest that kind of an attitude, there is little that can be done for him. However, if one with the wrong kind of attitude will continue to read that which is contained in the Bible, then Paul's remark about God's revealing this unto him, will become apparent. God has his way of revealing our mistakes, by drawing the conclusions which we refuse to draw. This is seen in his daily providence, as, for example, the troubled times in which we are now living furnish conclusive proof of our mistaken attitudes which have been accepted as right. Jehovah has repeatedly promised to bless his people, if they will follow his teaching faithfully; but any thoughtful person knows that we are beset by trying situations on every hand, which is evidence enough to show that we are not always faithful.

The guide-lines for successful Christian living are succinctly stated in many parts of the New Testament, as, for example: "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.) This, incidentally, will correct any improper attitude, which any reader of the New Testament may have. "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; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Pet. 1: 3,

4.) The attitude of the unbelieving Jews in Judaea did not, unfortunately, die with that generation; a continuation of that same spirit can be seen almost anywhere, and at practically any time. Its "trade-mark" is characterized by rank sectarianism and hard intolerance. Joseph Fort Newton, in his autobiography, *River of Years*, notes that all of us need an open mind

and a humble heart; for it is so easy to fall a victim to Pharisaism, with its inevitable destruction of personality, hindrance of truth, reduction of usefulness, and loss of religion. This is enough to show that we should make very effort to get rid of the narrow mind, and the contracted heart. "The sin of making a Christ of our opinions and worshipping it" can come to any of us unawares. (See p. 80.) The word of God should sound as loud and clear as a fire alarm in our ears; and we should never fail to give heed to it. The principle we are now considering is expressed by James Harvey Robinson in these words:

"Of all human ambitions an open mind, eagerly expectant of new discoveries and ready to remold convictions in the light of added knowledge and dispelled ignorance and misapprehensions, is the noblest, rarest, and the most difficult to achieve."

#### Paul's Explanation for His Prolonged Absence

(1 Thess. 2: 17-20)

*But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.*

Paul likens the rude and drastic manner in which he and his companions were taken away from the young Thessalonian Christians to a bereavement. The original term for the expression "being bereaved" (*aporphanzō*) is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Its literal meaning is to be "orphaned" or, parents bereft or deprived of their children. It is easy to see the word "orphan" in the word which Paul used, namely, *ap-orphan-izō*. The usual word for "orphan" (*orphanos*) is found in John 14: 18 and James 1: 27, and in some manuscripts, Mark 12: 40 ("houses of widows and

orphans"). Paul's use of the term in the lesson text clearly indicated his personal feelings for the Thessalonian brethren. It had been about six months since he had seen them. The apostle had made repeated efforts to return to Thessalonica, but had not been successful in his attempts, due to the activities of Satan.

Satan, a transliteration of the Greek word *satan*, is the same as the devil; both terms carry with them the idea of adversary or slanderer. (Rev. 12: 9.) It is possible that Satan is the personal name of the devil. At any rate, they both refer to a wicked, personal spirit, the embodiment of all evil, who is for ever opposing God and his people. When Paul and his company were not permitted to preach in Asia and Bithynia, Luke attributes the restraining force to the Holy Spirit (Acts 16: 6, 7); but when the apostle was not allowed to return to Thessalonica, the hindrance was charged to Satan. Paul, obviously knew the source of the hindrance in each instance, and was therefore able to trace it to the proper source. The verb "hinder," according to Robertson, means to cut in; and as used here, the idea is to cut in a road, or make it impassable.

Paul's remark about the Thessalonian Christians being his hope, joy, or crown of glorying, was apparently based on the custom of his day; as, for example, when a king or some distinguished person visited a place, or when some outstanding service had been performed by some one, a garland of glory, or of victory, would be extended or awarded. And so Paul, in keeping with that custom, wanted the brethren in Thessalonica to know that when the Lord comes at the last day, he could wish for no greater distinction, than the glory of having won them to Christ. McGarvey and Pendleton note that "the passage is a beautiful but effectual rebuke to the idle fears of some Christians that they will not recognize their friends in the hereafter. If Paul could not recognize the Thessalonians how could he present them as his crown, or glory in them?"

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

In what spirit did Paul meet the change and challenges which came in his ministry?

What basic problem would Gentile converts have which Jewish Christians did not encounter?

How did Paul go about encouraging the Thessalonian Christians?

What great blessing can often come from bitter persecution?

### The Golden Text

Why is the gospel often referred to as the gospel of God?

What is the basic meaning of the term "gospel"?

Why is it proper to speak of the gospel under different descriptive terms?

What are the basic elements of the gospel of Christ?

### Apostolic Motives and Conduct

What is the purpose of this section of the lesson text?

Why are motives so important in one's service to the Lord?

What charges were apparently brought against Paul and his co-workers?

In what way did the persecutors seek to establish their charges?

How did Paul go about replying to those charges?

What relevance do the principles which Paul followed have for our day?

What is the best possible answer a Christian can give to criticism?

What attitude did Paul manifest toward the young disciples and why?

What lesson is there in all of this for us?

### A Demonstration of Genuine Faith

How did Paul feel toward the gospel which he preached and the message which he recorded?

Why is the Bible different from all other books which have ever been written?

How do we know that the Bible is the word of God?

How did the Thessalonian converts feel about the message which they heard and accepted?

What always happens when the word of God is permitted to remain in one's heart?

Why was Paul always thankful for the Christians in Thessalonica?

In what way were the Christians in Thessalonica like those in Judaea?

Why do so many people refuse to accept the gospel message?

How may one be certain that he has the proper attitude toward the Lord and his word?

What are some of the characteristics of an unbelieving mind? of a believing mind?

### Paul's Explanation for His Prolonged Absence

In what way did the apostle describe their being driven away from the Christians in Thessalonica?

Who was directly responsible for this separation?

Who is Satan and what role did he play in the situation?

What is the literal meaning of "hindered"?

In what sense were the Thessalonian Christians Paul's hope, joy, and crown of glorying?

## Lesson VIII—May 24, 1970

# FAITHFULNESS OF THE THESSALONIANS

## Lesson Text

### 1 Thess. 3: 1-10

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Ath-ens alone;

2 And sent Tim'o-thy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort *you* concerning your faith;

3 That no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.

6 But when Tim'o-thy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to *see* you;

7 For this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith.

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For ye are our glory and our joy."* (1 Thess. 2: 20.)  
 DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 THESS. 2: 17-20.

### Daily Bible Readings

May 18. M.....	Examples of Faithfulness (Heb. 11: 1-16)
May 19. T.....	Faithfulness to God (Matt. 21: 45-47)
May 20. W.....	Paul Admonishes Faithfulness (Acts 20: 28-35)
May 21. T.....	Faithfulness of Abraham (James 2: 14-26)
May 22. F.....	Faithfulness of Daniel (Dan. 6: 1-4)
May 23. S.....	Faithful Stewardship (Matt. 25: 14-23)
May 24. S.....	Rewards of Faithfulness (1 Pet. 5: 1-4)

TIME.—First Thessalonians was written in the period of A.D. 50-52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

The term "faithful" literally means to be *full of faith*; and that, in turn, implies that one is characterized by firm and unswerving adherence to the person or object of his devotion. When Paul listed the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22, 23), he placed "faithfulness" as the first in the third triad, namely, "faithfulness, meekness, self-control"; and his evident purpose was to emphasize the fidelity which is seen in the life of a Christian who fully yields himself to Christ. The child of God, who is pleasing to him, will make every effort to discharge all duties, and will see to it that he handles aright those things which have been committed to his trust.

There is no greater example of such faithfulness, than that which has been left to us by the apostle Paul. In writing to his son in the gospel, Timothy, he said, "I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service" (1 Tim. 1: 12); and then, in his first epistle which has come down to us, he says, "For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts." (1 Thess. 2: 3, 4.) A faithful person is one who considers, first and foremost, the person or object of his faith; he

does not concern himself, even secondarily, with what others may think about him, or expect from him, so long as he has a clear vision of his own duty.

When Paul became a Christian, he was soon aware of a vital, mystical-moral fellowship with Jesus; a relationship which continued as long as the apostle was in the flesh. It was in this relationship that the secret of his faithfulness was embedded, namely, a state or condition of his faith which, when it began to work, presented himself as a living sacrifice in rational service to God. (Cf. Rom. 12: 1, 2.) The apostle's faith made him truthful, trustworthy, and sincere, and thoroughly dependable with reference to any obligation which was placed upon him. He was conscientious in all he did, and his fidelity to his call as a missionary has placed him upon the highest pinnacle in that field of endeavor. This faithfulness steadied Paul in all the storms of his life, and enabled him to walk with Jesus on the highway of love, a highway which had been built by God himself. (Cf. John 3: 16; 1 Cor. 13: 1-13.) And it was while living on this high elevation, that he was able to believe, to hope, and to love, all of which assured him of immortality, and made it possible for him to enter wholeheartedly into the suffering of Christ. (Cf. Col. 1: 24.)

### The Golden Text

*"For ye are our glory and our joy."* The words just quoted constitute Paul's answer to some questions which he asked the Thessalonian

brethren, as he sought to explain to them the reason for his not returning to them, after being forced away because of persecution. Their full

context is as follows: "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire: because we would fain have come unto you, I Paul once and again; and Satan hindered us. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy." (1 Thess. 2: 17-20.)

The Cambridge Bible Commentary on The New English Bible notes that it is characteristic that Paul's expectation at the coming of Christ, is bound up with what happens to his fellow-Christians here and now, since, as chapter 3 and verse 8 states that "it is the breath of life to us that you stand firm in the Lord." This sense of the interdependence in the Christian life is referred to in 1 Thessalonians again and again, as the apostle calls attention to the Lord's coming at the last day. (Cf. 1 Thess. 3: 13; 4: 13-18.) Some Bible students are of the opinion that some of Paul's enemies provoked him into writing the paragraph from which the golden text is taken, by insinuating that the apostle and his companions did not care what happened to their converts, after they, that is, the missionaries had escaped from the danger which threatened their lives. If this was the case, then Paul gave a ringing denial to the groundless charge, by

expressing the deepest feelings of their hearts, in the form of a question, with an unequivocal answer which the apostle himself supplied.

The portion of scripture from which the golden text is taken is one of the passages which strongly indicate that the Lord's people will recognize their loved one and acquaintances when they are safely in the glory world. We noted last week that McGarvey and Pendleton think that "the passage is a beautiful but effectual rebuke to the idle fears of some Christians that they will not recognize their friends in the hereafter. If Paul could not recognize the Thessalonians, how could he present them as his crown, or glory in them?" Albert Barnes, in summing up his comments on the passage, says, "Paul expected evidently to *recognize* the Thessalonian Christians at the day of judgment, for he said that they would be then his 'joy and crown of rejoicing,' verse 19. But this could not be, unless he should be able to know those who had been converted by his instrumentality. If he expected then to recognize them, and to rejoice with them, then we also may hope to know our pious friends in that happy world. Nothing in the Bible forbids this hope, and we can hardly believe that God has created the strong ties which bind us to each other, to endure for the present life only." (Cf. Luke 13: 28; Matt. 8: 11; 22: 29-32.)

### The Text Explained

#### Paul's Reason for Sending Timothy to Thessalonica

(1 Thess. 3: 1-5.)

*Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; and sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith; that no man be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that hereunto we are appointed. For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had*

*tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.*

The inferential conjunction "wherefore" shows that the section of the lesson text, which we are now considering, is but a continuation of the idea which is expressed in the last paragraph of the preceding chapter, Paul's reason for not returning personally to Thessalonica. He had been driven away by persecution, and Satan had repeatedly frustrated his every effort to return. After Paul and Silas had been forced to leave Thessalonica, their next stop was at Beroea, where they received a sympathetic hearing from both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 17: 10-12.) "But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that

the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Berea also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes. And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as to the sea: and Silas and Timothy abode there still. But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed, they departed." (Acts 17: 13-15.)

Whether or not Silas reached Athens while Paul was there is not known: Bible students are sharply divided regarding this question, in spite of Paul's use of the plural "we." The record does not say that Timothy reached that city while Paul was there either; but the implication is that he did; for if not, how could Paul say that "we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; and sent Timothy, our brother, and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith"? The next mention we have of Silas in the inspired record is in Acts 18: 5: "But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." The fact that Luke records only the activities of Paul in Athens, suggests the fact that he was actually alone in that city, so far as his fellow workers were concerned. The apostle may have been using the "editorial we" in the passage now before us. It is possible that Silas was sent back to Philippi, as we shall see.

The whole situation now under consideration gives us some idea of the co-operative efforts of the missionaries, as they endeavored to carry on their work for the Lord under difficult circumstances. Paul did not run away from a dangerous situation for selfish reasons. Jesus foresaw the need for acting as Paul did, as may be learned from such passages as Matthew 10: 23. (Cf. Acts 14: 1-7.) Paul was evidently the chief spokesman, even when the other missionaries were with him (cf. Acts 16: 11-15) 17: 1ff; and it was for this reason that the hatred of the unbelieving Jews was directed toward him. And as long as the apostle could leave behind him

such churches as he did in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and other places, there was no need for him to sacrifice his life prematurely, and especially since he could leave some of his helpers behind, or send them back later, to look after the newly converted disciples. McGarvey suggests that no doubt much of the zeal and fidelity of the young churches was due to the fostering care of Luke, Timothy, and Silas, who alternately lingered behind the apostle for this purpose.

The glowing terms in which Paul spoke of Timothy tell something of the esteem in which he was held by Paul; but the evident reason why the apostle spoke of him as he did on the occasion now before us, was to enable the Thessalonian brethren to see something of Paul's concern for them. Paul was not able to return himself, but he sent a representative who was deeply interested in their welfare, and who was approved by both God and the apostle himself. Timothy therefore was eminently fitted to do the work for which he was sent, namely, to establish the Thessalonian brethren, and to comfort them concerning their faith. (Cf. Phil. 2: 19-22.)

Persecution and afflictions are the common lot of those who live closest to the Lord. Jesus told his disciples, while he was with them in the flesh, that they would receive the same kind of treatment from the world, which was accorded him (cf. John 15: 18-21); and when Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he said, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3: 12.) Paul had explained this proposition to the young church in Thessalonica, while he was still with them; and it was his fervent hope that the young Christians in that city would not be moved by that which they were suffering.

The original word for "be moved" is *sainesthai*, the present infinite passive of *sainō*. This Greek word appears nowhere else in the New Testament, and its basic meaning, from Homer on down, is to wag the tail, as a dog, to flatter, to be deceived with artful flattery, to be perturbed; all of which suggests that physical pain from maltreatment was not the only kind of suf-

fering which the young Christians in Thessalonica endured. Hendriksen notes that the enemy does not always come with the sword; sometimes he appears with horns like a lamb (cf. Rev. 13: 11), or with soft words of flattery, like a dog wagging his tail. The danger therefore was very real that the young disciples might be cajoled with specious promises (cf. 2 Pet. 2: 18, 19), unless their faith was firmly established in the Lord. Paul's desire for some word regarding the spiritual condition of the Thessalonian brethren was so intense, that it had become intolerable or unbearable. The apostle therefore was willing to suffer alone, if only he could get some message from his beloved brethren in Thessalonica.

It should be noted in verse 5 that Paul dropped the "we" of verses 1-4, and stated simply that "when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith." Albert Barnes, in commenting on verse 5, says, "Lest *by any means*. Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former heathen friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there." Although the actual efforts to deceive and lure the people away from Christ was done by the unbelieving Jews, and possibly some others, the real tempter was Satan himself. (Cf. the agency of the serpent in the garden of Eden.) The aorist indicative (had tempted) indicated that the tempter was already at work; while the aorist subjunctive (should be) cast doubt upon Satan's success.

#### Timothy's Report to Paul and Its Effect

(1 Thess. 3: 6-8)

*But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*

Paul had finished his work in

Athens and was in Corinth, some forty miles to the west, when Timothy delivered his report to the apostle. If one will read Luke's account of this in Acts 18, it will be easy for him to see that the report which Timothy brought to him, had a profound effect upon Paul. Paul had been reasoning in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuading Jews and Greeks; "but when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." (Acts 18; 5.)

The adversative conjunction "but," with which verse 5 begins, suggest some kind of contrast between the activities of Paul, as set forth in verses 4 and 5. Verse 4 says that he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks; *but* when Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth from Macedonia, Paul was *constrained* by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. The original word from which we have "constrained" is found in the New Testament twelve times, once in Matthew, twice in Paul's epistles, five times in Luke, and three times in Acts; but in no other place is the term rendered as it is in Acts 18: 5. Furthermore, Robertson (Word Pictures in the New Testament and his Greek Grammar, p. 808) argues that the word is "the direct middle imperfect indicative, not the imperfect passive as the translations have it." Thus, instead of "was constrained by the word," the rendering should be, in his opinion, "held himself to the word."

This of course, is a textual question for the critics, but it appears that, so far as the practical meaning is concerned, the grammatical construction makes little difference. Something happened which caused Paul to increase his efforts in preaching the gospel. Many Bible students feel that, in addition to the moral encouragement which Timothy's report gave the apostle, he also received from the hands of Silas, who may have returned to Philippi, the first financial assistance from the Philippian brethren after leaving Macedonia, which enabled the apostle to give up, for the time being at least, his tent-making, and devote

his full time to the ministry of the word. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 9; Phil. 4: 14-16; 1 Cor. 2: 1-5.)

It is easy to see, from the language of the text now before us, that Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, almost immediately after Timothy delivered his report to the apostle, who, as already pointed out, was in Corinth at that time. His words are: "But when Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, . . ." It was with this letter that Paul began that which proved to be a collection of letters, which fill more than one fourth of that which is included in the whole of the New Testament. There are fourteen of the Pauline letters, if we count Hebrews as a Pauline production; and they contain, as they are now divided in the New Testaments in common use, exactly one hundred chapters.

It is fair to assume, judging from the contents of First Thessalonians, that Paul received from Timothy, in addition to the report regarding the faith, love, and good remembrance of Paul and his companions, some information concerning the spiritual status of the brethren in Thessalonica. And so, in addition to expressing his earnest affection for the young church in the Macedonian city, the apostle also wanted to correct some doctrinal errors into which at least some of them had fallen. Some of these questions will be pointed out, as we proceed with our study of the two letters. But for the time being the apostle told the Thessalonian brethren, "For it is new life to us to know that you are holding fast to the Lord." (The Twentieth Century New Testament.)

### Real Living Includes Thanksgiving

(1 Thess. 3: 9, 10)

*For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?*

Goodspeed, Hendriksen, and others, render verse 8: Now I, or we, can *really* live, provided the Thessa-

lonians remained steadfast in the Lord; and Paul's reaction to that idea reminds us of a similar feeling on the part of one of the Old Testament psalmists, namely, "What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, yea, in the presence of all his people." (Psalm 116: 12-14.)

Neither the psalmist nor Paul was one of those thoughtless and indifferent men, who pass through life, receiving all, enjoying all, expecting all, without ever bestowing a thought on the bountiful Giver. And it is also easy to see that such men recognize that "every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1: 17.) This is true, whether the reference is to material blessings, or whether it is to those higher blessings, in the form of the souls of people who have been rescued from the evil one, such as it was in the case of the Thessalonian disciples who had been converted to Christ. (Cf. Matt. 16: 26; Rom. 15: 15-17.)

Paul's attitude toward the Thessalonian brethren, and his response to the glad tidings which he received concerning them, is a forceful example of the meaning and manner of true worship, whether it be in private or in the company of others. Worship is not simply the performance of certain acts; it is rather something which takes place in the heart—"the adoring reverence of the human spirit for the divine." And since this is true, it is absolutely essential that the emotions be aroused; and this is done by the knowledge of who and what God is, and what he has done for us. Paul realized fully that he was an instrument in the hands of the Lord, as he went forth into Thessalonica to preach the gospel, and that God would be responsible for whatever the increase might be. (Cf. 1 Cor. 3: 5-9.)

The apostle's heart was filled to overflowing when he heard of the steadfastness of the young church in Thessalonica; and he could do noth-



ing less than render thanks to God for them, and pray fervently that he might have a further opportunity of seeing the brethren, and doing what he could to perfect their faith. Paul does not mention specifically, at this point, just what deficiencies were present in the faith of the Thessalonian brethren; but they evidently involved those matters which he discusses in the fourth and fifth chapters of the epistle now under consideration.

It was in this way that Paul, and other New Testament writers, set the pattern for their epistles. They made plain their relationship to God, and to each other; and then presented such instruction, and discussed such issues, which were current then, as to make known the will of the Lord to the people of that day. But in doing that, they accomplished their aim in such a manner, as to make their teaching applicable for all time, and to all

people who profess to follow Christ or who desire to become members of the church, or, which is the same thing, citizens of the Lord's kingdom. This is precisely what the New Testament claims for itself. "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; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.)

## 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 "faithfulness"?  
How alone may one demonstrate his faithfulness?  
Discuss this principle as seen at work in the life of Paul.

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?  
In what way did he relate his converts to the second coming of Christ?  
What may have caused Paul to write these things to the Thessalonians?  
Is there any evidence here for recognition of loved ones in heaven? Why?  
What effect should this have on our thinking now?

### Paul's Reason for Sending Timothy to Thessalonica

What is suggested by the term "wherefore" at the beginning of the chapter?  
Why did not Paul himself return to the scenes of his labors in Thessalonica?  
Trace the movements of Paul after he was forced to leave that city.  
What is signified by Paul's being "left behind in Athens alone"?  
Why would Paul flee the persecution and leave the disciples to suffer?  
How did the apostle feel toward Timothy, as a person for such a task?  
Why is persecution the common lot of the faithful in Christ?  
What, apparently, was the type of affliction the Thessalonian Christians suffered?  
Why was it so essential that Paul send to find out about them?

Who actually presented, and who inspired, the temptations which the Thessalonians suffered?

### Timothy's Report to Paul and Its Effects

Where was Paul when Timothy delivered his report of the Thessalonians to him?  
What can you say of the effect which the message had on the apostle?  
What is suggested by the conjunction "but"?  
Discuss the possible reasons for the increased efforts on the part of Paul's preaching.  
When, apparently, did Paul write First Thessalonians?  
What important event did this letter mark in his career?  
How many letters did Paul write, so far as the record is concerned? (Cf. Col. 4: 16.)  
What, apparently, did Timothy's report to Paul contain?  
Why was the apostle so anxious to get a letter off to the Thessalonian Christians?

### Real Living Includes Thanksgiving

Why does real living include thanksgiving?  
What do thoughtful people always recognize in God?  
Why, then, are thoughtful people thankful?  
In what way does the action of Paul illustrate the meaning and manner of true worship?  
For what did the apostle pray, as he wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians?  
What was the pattern which he and other New Testament writers set for their epistles?

## Lesson IX—May 31, 1970

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

## Lesson Text

## 1 Thess. 4: 9-18

9 But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;

10 For indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you;

12 That ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest; who have no hope,

14 For if we believe that Je'-sus

died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Je'-sus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first;

17 Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Golden Text.—*"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thess. 4. 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 4: 1-8.

## Daily Bible Readings

May 25. M.....	..Christ Our Judge (1 Cor. 15: 20-28)
May 26. T.....	..Christ Our Hope (Phil. 3: 8-16)
May 27. W.....	..Christ Our Deliverer (John 10: 11-18)
May 28. T.....	..Christ Our Saviour (Matt. 1: 21)
May 29. F.....	..Christ Our King (John 18: 33-40)
May 30. S.....	..Christ Our Redeemer (1 John 2: 1-4)
May 31. S.....	..Christ Our Strength (Col. 2: 1-7)

TIME.—First Thessalonians was written in the period of A.D. 50-52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

The two principal words in the subject of today's lesson, "hope" and "future," express ideas about which every normal and responsible person is interested. Alexander Pope tells us that "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and Alice Hawthorne wrote:

Soft as the voice of an angel,  
Breathing a lesson unheard,  
Hope, with a gentle persuasion,  
Whispers her comforting word:  
Wait till the darkness is over,  
Wait till the tempest is done,  
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow,  
After the shower is gone.

Whispering Hope, O how welcome  
thy voice,  
Making my heart in its sorrow re-  
joice.

Hope is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, and one of the three great principles or graces, which Paul says continues: "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13: 13.) Hope therefore, although somewhat inferior to love, is, nevertheless, one of the basic elements of Christian character; and it is entirely in keeping with the teaching of the

New Testament, to say that hope belongs to the very heart of our salvation. Paul says that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8: 24), while we learn from Hebrew 6: 19 that hope is the anchor of the soul. And so, not only is one saved and kept steadfast by hope; it is impossible for any one to live a normal life without hope. Edward Everett Hale wrote:

Open the door of your hearts, my  
lads.

To the angel of Love and Truth,  
When the world is full of unnum-  
bered joys

In the beautiful dawn of youth.  
Casting aside all things that mar,  
Saying to Wrong, "Depart!"

To the voices of Hope that are call-  
ing you

Open the door of your heart.

The very nature of hope looks toward the future; and, insofar as the Christian is concerned, the future toward which he looks is both in this life, and in that which is to come. The future in heaven will not be his to enjoy, unless he looks forward to, and makes the best use he can of, the future of his life here upon the earth. Jesus told his disciples, just before he left them to return to the Father, that he would be with them all the days of their lives, here upon the earth; and would be ready to receive them on the other side. (Matt. 28: 20; John 14: 1-3.) These and similar promises which the Lord made to his people, consti-

tute the only ground for hope which exists.

In addition to reading and studying that which the Bible says about "hope" and the "future" of God's people, Christians should frequently sing about those marvelous blessings. There are few things in the heritage of God's people today greater than the privilege of singing his praises; and one of the great songs on the subject now before us, was written by the Fanny J. Crosby, entitled, *Blessed Assurance*; she wrote:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;  
Born of his Spirit, washed in his  
blood.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my  
sight;

Angels descending, bring from  
above

Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
1 in my Saviour am happy and  
blest;

Watching and waiting, looking  
above,

Filled with his goodness, lost in his  
love.

This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day  
long;

This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Saviour all the day  
long.

## The Golden Text

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

## The Text Explained

### The Lord's Will Regarding Brotherly Love and Physical Labor

(1 Thess. 4: 9-12)

*But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged*

*you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.*

The entire fourth chapter of First Thessalonians, and the first twenty-two verses of chapter five, are taken up with the type of teaching which Paul doubtless would have done, if he had been present with the brethren in Thessalonica. This is the kind of teaching which was needed to "perfect that which is lacking in your faith." (See 1 Thess. 3: 10.) The first 8 verses of

the chapter now before us is the devotional reading for today; and, as any thoughtful person can see, that portion of the chapter is vitally connected with the lesson text for this lesson. Paul began by reminding the brethren of the kind of teaching they had received from him, which is essential to being well-pleasing unto God; and he exhorts them to continue their growth in the Lord's favor. The particular question which is discussed in the first paragraph of the chapter, is with reference to moral purity in sex-relationships. To live as the Lord directs in this matter is essential to the Christian's sanctification. (See 1 Thess. 4: 7, 8; cf. Heb. 12: 14.)

The next item of instruction which Paul included in his letter, is that of brotherly love; and if we should bring together all that the New Testament teaches on this subject, it is doubtful if there would be enough space allotted in the lesson to include it. However, since the question is so important, it will not be out of place to list a few passages here. "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.)

"Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 13-18.)

"If a man say, I love God, and

hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John 4: 20, 21.) "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13: 34, 35.) Peter tops his list of Christian graces with brotherly love, and warns, "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." (2 Pet. 1: 9; cf. Col. 3: 14.) Peter, on the other hand, shows that "if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (See 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.)

Is it any wonder therefore that Paul could say to the Thessalonian brethren, that they had no need that one write unto them concerning love of the brethren: "for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"? Paul reminded the Thessalonian disciples that they did indeed love all the brethren in Macedonia; but quickly added, "But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more." This is to say that there is never a time or place where our love for the brethren should cease to grow. It is well to keep in mind that the love which God teaches his children to have for each other, is the kind which is indicated by the Greek *agapao*. This word means to have a preference for, appreciate, and maintain a feeling for the person in question, which would lead the lover to give himself up for the good of the object of his love. This original word is much stronger than the other term for love (*phileo*), which expresses natural affection, such as a parent feels for a child, or one close friend has for another. The latter kind of love will give itself up to a friend or loved one, while the former will give itself for another. When the Lord's people

love as they should, right relationships will follow in other areas. (Cf. John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3; Rom. 13: 8-10.)

The three exhortations of verse 11—"that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you"—are not three admonitions directed to three classes of actual or potential offenders; but rather to the church as a whole. This is true, because the seed of all such sins could easily be in, or at least could easily find its way into, every heart. (Cf. Prov. 4: 23; 23: 7; Mark 7: 20-23.) But, in order to see better the force of Paul's exhortations here, let us look at each one of them separately and objectively.

(1) "*Study to be quiet*," or, as the marginal note has it, be *ambitious* to be quiet. This admonition is paraphrased by A. S. Peake in these words: "Make it your ambition to pursue your ordinary avocations with a quiet mind." The original word for "study" is found three times in the New Testament, here and in Rom. 15: 20; and in 2 Cor. 5: 9. The term "quiet" refers to their manner of living, which, among other things, includes silence. (Cf. Acts 11: 18, where the same original word is used.) Vincent suggests that the disturbances, which are rebuked in the second epistle, may have already begun to show themselves, so that there is a possible allusion to the idle busybodies of 2 Thess. 3: 11.

(2) "*To do your own business*." This is another way of saying, "Mind your own affairs." There is a possibility that the Thessalonian brethren, or at least some of them, were expecting the immediate return of the Lord from heaven, and that they therefore saw no necessity for engaging in any gainful occupation, so far as they were concerned. This, too, is a possible reference to 2 Thess. 3: 11. But regardless of the reason for the exhortation, the Lord's people should be more concerned with their own affairs, than to try to regulate the affairs of others. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4: 15.)

(3) "*To work with your own hands*." It has been estimated that at the time of the writing of this epistle, that more than half of the people in the Roman Empire were

slaves; and that, along with the exhortation to work with their own hands, indicates that most, if not all, of the Thessalonian Christians were from the working class. But whether one is engaged in manual labor or not, he is under divine injunction to work; no man, whatever his actual needs may be, is permitted with the Lord's approval to live in idleness. William James says, "The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 9-13; 2 Thess. 3: 10.)

The apostle Paul assigns two reasons for work on the part of the Lord's people, namely, (1) "That ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without," and (2) that they "may have need of nothing." Every Christian is under obligation to set a good example before those who are not Christians (cf. Rom. 13: 13; Col. 4: 5, 6); and no able-bodied and mentally alert child of God, is at liberty to depend upon others for his physical needs. (Cf. Acts 20: 34, 35; Eph. 4: 28.)

### Divine Consolation for Grief

(1 Thess. 4: 13, 14)

*But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

It has already been indicated that the Thessalonians to whom Paul wrote the epistle we are now considering, may have expected the Lord's early return; and the more one studies the letter, the more it appears that such was the case. And if that was the way they felt, it is fairly easy to see how they would be confused with reference to the state of those who experienced death before the Lord's coming. This, apparently, was the background of their grief over the departure of their loved ones. But whatever may have been the thinking of the early Thessalonian Christians, it is safe to say that both they, and those of us today, need to be grounded in the truth regarding the dead in Christ; for it is just as essential that we, as well as they, "sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope."

Taking the whole situation into

account, it appears quite likely that the Thessalonian brethren felt that the dead, even though they were the Lord's people at the time of their departure from this life, would not be able to participate in the joys of Christians at the Lord's coming. But Paul saw the need, and made the effort, to correct this viewpoint, both here and in the next section of the lesson text. Thus, the important and permanent value of the passage for us, lies in the explicit statement of the real basis for the Christian hope. Paul does not forbid sorrow for the loss of loved ones who die in Christ; his lesson is this: Such hopeless sorrow, as manifested by those who have not hope, is both unwise and unworthy of those who believe in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who should be able to manifest that faith by their relative composure.

Although referred to as a sleep in the Old Testament (Gen. 47: 30; 2 Sam. 7: 12), it remained for Jesus and New Testament writers, particularly Paul, to perfect the idea of death as a sleep. (Cf. John 11: 11; and the lesson text for today.) Our word "cemetery" is, in fact, from the same original root, namely, the sleeping place of the dead. The New Testament use of the term is "a picture word of rest and calmness which stands in dramatic contrast to the rage and violence of the scene," in the midst of which the first Christian martyr fell asleep. The following words of John Greenleaf Whittier are fitting:

Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cy-  
press-trees!  
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play!  
Who has not learned in hours of  
faith,  
The truth to flesh and sense un-  
known,  
That Life is ever lord of Death,  
And love can never lose its own!

### **The Truth Concerning the Dead in Christ**

(1 Thess. 4: 15-18)

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede*

*them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Some people have thoughtlessly affirmed that Paul, in the passage just quoted, expected to be alive when Jesus comes; while others, following the same type of thinking, could say with the same confidence that he expected to be dead before the Lord's second advent, based on 2 Cor. 4: 14. Paul was using the pronoun "we" pretty much like we do, when we say, "We of this country now number some two hundred million people; but within another century, if the world stands, we shall be many more millions, if places can be found to put them"; but no one expects the "we" of today to be the "we" of another century away. People who seek to interpret the Scriptures, should be careful to take all the facts into consideration.

The section of the lesson text now under consideration is one of the principal passages, which those who advocate the premillennial coming of Christ rely on heavily. But if one will take into account the facts in the case, along with the added idea that Paul was, in all probability, endeavoring to show the Thessalonian brethren that Christian people who are alive when Christ comes at the last day, will have no advantage over the Christian dead. The contrast is between the dead in Christ and the living in Christ, and not between the dead in Christ and the dead out of Christ. There is no scripture whosoever which teaches that there will be a difference in the time of the resurrection of the good and the bad. Jesus himself says, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5: 28, 29) cf. Dan. 12: 2; Acts

24: 15; Matt. 25: 31-46.) There is no connection whatsoever between the resurrection of Rev. 20: 4, 5, and the resurrection which Paul is discussing in the passage now before us.

If one will take into consideration that which the New Testament says regarding the Lord's second coming, and the events to follow, it will not be difficult for him to see that Paul's purpose here was not to give an exhaustive account of the happenings of that great day. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 10-12; Rev. 20: 11-15.) But it is well to note that some of Paul's statements are distinctive, and in part unparalleled; as, for example, the Lord's "*shout of command.*" This word is found nowhere else in the New Testament. Vincent compares it with "a general to his army, an admiral to his oarsmen, or a charioteer to his horses." *The voice*

*of the archangel.* The term for "archangel" is found in the New Testament, only here and in Jude 9. (Cf. Rev. 12: 7; Dan. 10: 13, 21; 12: 1.) It is not known whether there was only one archangel, or whether Michael was only one of a group of such heavenly beings. (Cf. Luke 1: 19.)

Thus, both the dead in Christ and the living in Christ, at the last day, shall meet the Lord together; so that the living in Christ will not precede the dead in Christ, or otherwise have any advantage over them. (The word "prevent," at the time the King James Version was made, meant that which is signified today by the term "precede.") Jesus will come in person at the last day, and not by proxy. The word of God is a great means of comforting those who are willing to receive it into their hearts.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What impression do the words "hope" and "future" make on the average thoughtful mind?

What are some of the basic teachings of the Bible regarding hope?

What does the future hold for the faithful child of God?

What is essential here before the hope of a never-ending life in heaven is realized?

Why cannot the life of the faithful child of God be destroyed?

Discuss the power of gospel singing as it relates to the hope of the future.

### The Lord's Will Regarding Brotherly Love and Physical Labor

What is the nature of the contents of the last two chapters of First Thessalonians?

What is the theme of the first paragraph of chapter 4?

What does the apostle say regarding brotherly love?

How important is this question to successful Christian living? Why?

How well were the Thessalonian brethren

fulfilling this requirement and why could they not stop?

What were the next exhortations which Paul set before the Thessalonians?

Discuss each one.

What two reasons does Paul assign for work on the part of the Lord's people?

### Divine Consolation for Grief

What, apparently, was the occasion for the exhortation regarding sorrowing for the dead?

Is it wrong to grieve for the loss of loved ones? Give reasons for your answer.

Under what figure does the New Testament picture the dead in Christ? And why is this true?

### The Truth Concerning the Dead in Christ

What did Paul think regarding his own status when Christ comes?

What was the apostle's purpose in writing this section of the lesson text?

What does the New Testament teach regarding the time of the general resurrection?

What particular things does Paul mention regarding the last day of history?

In what way will the Lord's people meet the coming Saviour?

How can the word of God comfort his people?

## Lesson X—June 7, 1970

## WATCHFULNESS ENJOINED

### Lesson Text

#### 1 Thess. 5: 1-12

1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that ought be written unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief;

5 For ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness;

6 So then let us not sleep, as do the the rest, but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Je-sus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up even as also ye do.

12 But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Abstain from every form of evil.*” (1 Thess. 5: 22.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Thess. 5: 13-28.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 1. M. .... Parable of Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matt. 25: 1-13)  
June 2. T. .... Watchfulness Necessary (Matt. 24: 42-51)  
June 3. W. .... We Must Be Ready (Luke 2: 35-40)  
June 4. T. .... The Judgment Scene (Matt. 25: 31-46)  
June 5. F. .... Destruction Upon the Wicked (2 Thess. 1: 1-10)  
June 6. S. .... Salvation to the Righteous (2 Pet. 1: 1-11)  
June 7. S. .... Home in Heaven (John 14: 1-10)

TIME.—First Thessalonians was written in the period of A.D. 50-52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

The question of watchfulness is pre-eminently a Bible subject, as may be seen from the following scriptures: “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand stedfast in your faith.” (1 Pet. 5: 8, 9.) “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” (Rev. 3: 1-3.) “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. It is as when

a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch. Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.” (Mark 13: 33-37.)

After exhorting the Christian soldier to put on the whole armor of God, so that he can stand against the wiles of the devil, the apostle Paul then admonished that prayer and watchfulness be continued in all perseverance. (See Eph. 6: 10-18.) The thoughtful student can easily see that watchfulness implies, not only earnest vigilance and alert attention, but a steady resistance to any tendency to relax one's efforts, or grow slack in either purpose or labor. Satan never wearies in his efforts to lead the faithful child of



God astray; and he is often most successful with those who feel that they do not need to be on guard, with reference to those sins which they think that they have no temptation to commit. That is precisely the area in which Peter experienced his great fall. (Cf. Luke 22: 31-34.) Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders is a classic example of the need to be on guard at all times, and under all kind of circumstances; for even the best and most influential of men are in danger of departing from the truth, if they are not careful. (Read Acts 20: 28-31; cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3-7.)

The acropolis of Sardis was fifteen hundred feet above the plain, with three sides almost perpendicular, thus leaving, as the rulers thought, only one possible approach to its capture. It was, in their estimation, with ordinary watchfulness, an impregnable stronghold; and it was for this reason that the wealthy Lydian king, Croesus, imagined himself safe in Sardis. But what he apparently did not know, or carelessly ignored, was that there was a fissure in the rock, which gave foothold to careful climbers, advancing in single file. It was in this vain confidence that Croesus neglected to watch any, but what he considered the only possible approach, until one night the besieging army of Cyrus advanced up the dangerous cliff, and by morning the seemingly unassailable fortress was captured, and the Lydian empire broken.

Martin Luther was one of the

bravest men of the Reformation. Both his attitudes and his actions required almost superhuman strength and courage. As he journeyed to the famous Diet of Worms, against the warnings and appeals of his friends, he said, with a kind of gay and reckless courage, that he would go to Worms, even if there were as many devils there, as there were tiles upon the roof-tops. But when he was compelled to remain in his friendly prison in Wartburg, the one time brave and fearless man, was full of nervousness and timidities, flinging his ink-well at imaginary demons, having become a victim of depression, weakness, and fear. When George Frederic Watts, one of the great painters and sculptors of the nineteenth century, and one of the noblest of men, said, while yet a relatively young man, "I am nothing, but I aspire. The only thing I possess, and I never remember the time when I was without it, is an aim toward the highest, the best, and a burning desire to reach it." No one is surprised that he took for his motto and the watchword of his life, "The Utmost for the Highest." This is all illustrated by his great piece of sculpture of a horse and its youthful rider, entitled, *Physical Energy*, on which he was at work when he died. He continually altered the head of the young man, always throwing it farther and farther back, so that at the end his face looked, not at the earth, but heavenward. This is the spirit of watchfulness. (Cf. Col. 3: 1-4.)

## The Golden Text

*"Abstain from every form of evil."* There is an important difference between the renderings in the King James Version, and the one just quoted, namely, the American Standard Version. The KJV has, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." The original term which is translated "appearance" in the Authorized Version, is *eidous*, genitive singular of *eidōs*, which signifies every *form* or *kind* of evil, that is, anything which is actually evil, rather than something which only appears to be so. (Cf. Rom. 12: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 3; 1 Cor. 5: 13.)

The admonition which forms the golden text for today's lesson, is the

last of a series of exhortations, beginning with verse 19, and all included in a single sentence, namely, "Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." Hendriksen, in commenting on this sentence, says, When verses 19-22 are studied together, it becomes immediately evident that the rule "prove all things" cannot mean that one should enter into every place and practice of wickedness, and discover for one's self what its nature is. On the contrary, he should be willing to listen to every prophetic utterance, and endeavor to deter-

mine whether or not it is the word of the Lord (cf. 1 John 4: 1-6); and if he is sure that what he reads or hears is the truth, then he should hold on to it; but every kind of evil advice, which is spoken by a false prophet, or any other kind of evil, must be carefully avoided. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

The original word for "evil" is used both as an adjective (cf. 2 Thess. 3: 2; 2 Tim. 3: 13), and as a noun (see Rom. 12: 9; Matt. 5: 11). The obvious use of the term in the text now before us, is as a substantive—"all manner of evil" (Matt. 5: 11)—"every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5: 22.) *Evil* in this sense is the very antithesis of *good*, that which is acceptable to the Lord. John Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, represents

Satan as saying,  
So farewell hope, and with hope  
farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse! All good to me  
is lost;  
Evil, be thou my good.

The essence of true or acceptable religion is often expressed, throughout the Bible, in epitome, as, for example, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6: 8.) Here we have the individual—"thee, O man"—in relation to both God and man; or, the duty or responsibility of the individual to himself, to his fellow men, and to God. (Cf. Matt. 22: 35-40; Rom. 13: 8-10; Tit. 2: 11, 12.)

## The Text Explained

### The Time of the Lord's Coming Has Not Been Revealed

(1 Thess. 5: 1-5)

*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

The Standard Bible Commentary notes that when Christian hopes are vividly pictured, as in last week's lesson, human nature naturally asks, "When?" This is true, even of people who have been correctly taught regarding such events as the Lord's final coming, especially so, if they are thinking primarily of the bliss of the world to come. But when the Lord's people get their "bearings," so to speak, they come to realize that they know that no immediate answer can be given to the question which they pose, especially as it is related to the *times*, the long eras or periods, and the *seasons*, the shorter epochs into which the eras or periods are divided. (Cf. Acts 1: 6, 7.)

Although the apostle Paul was with the young church in Thessalonica for only a short time, it is easy to see from the two letters which he wrote to the brethren, that his instruction, with reference to basic issues, had been rather thorough. But with a life of hope being lived in the midst of persecutions, and all kinds of efforts on the part of the evil one, to turn them away from the truth, it is understandable that their thinking would be turned in the direction of the immediate fulfillment of their cherished expectations. And this was one of the fundamental reasons why further apostolic teaching was needed, such as Paul was supplying by means of his letters to them.

The idea just suggested is, indeed, in keeping with Paul's word to Timothy regarding the purposes of the inspired scriptures, 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." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4.) People must first be taught the truth; secondly, they must be reproofed, or have their attention called to any erroneous thinking or action into which they may have fallen; thirdly, whatever is lacking, or whatever is wrong, must be corrected; and fourthly, this process

must be continued until the man of God reaches perfection, or maturity. If one will read the letters to the angels of the seven churches in Asia, it will be easy for him to see that that was precisely the plan which the Lord himself followed in dealing with those people.

When Jesus left this earth, to return to the Father, the angels who were present foretold his second coming: "And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." (Acts 1: 10, 11.) Jesus himself frequently referred to his second advent: in fact, a major part of one of his recorded sermons is devoted to that question. (See Matt. 24: 1-25: 46.) But neither Jesus, nor any other inspired writer, ever gave any intimation as to when the second coming would place. Jesus, in fact, said this, in the sermon just referred to.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24: 36-44.)

There is no reason why any responsible person should not know that the Lord is coming again: that information is within the reach of

all men. (Read Matt. 16: 24-28; Luke 18: 1-8.) But, as we have already seen, the time of the Lord's second coming is uncertain, so far as human beings are concerned. (See Mark 13: 33-37; Rev. 3: 1-3.) With these two indisputable facts before us, it should be easy for us to see that there are two vital lessons which we should learn, namely, (1) to be ready for the Lord's coming at all times (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 10-12; 1 John 3: 1-3); and (2) to regard his promised coming as a basis for encouragement and hope (John 14: 1-3).

The second coming of Christ is frequently compared to the coming of a thief in the night, that is, as being unexpected; but the Bible nowhere teaches that the Christian himself should be taken unaware by that event. That, in fact, is the plain affirmation of the portion of the lesson text now under consideration: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." Not only are the Lord's people to watch, and be ready for the Lord's coming; they are exhorted to look for and earnestly desire "the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." (See 2 Pet. 3: 12.) The phrase "the day of the Lord," and similar expressions (see 1 Cor. 1: 8; 5: 5; 2 Cor. 1: 14; 1 Thess. 5: 2; 2 Thess. 2: 2; 2 Pet. 3: 10), generally, if not indeed in every instance, refers to the day of the Lord's second coming, at the end of the world.

### The Need for a Vigilant and Sober Life

(1 Thess. 5: 6-11)

*So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we*

*should live together with him. Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do.*

Inasmuch as the Lord's people are of the day, they should live accordingly. Night is the natural and normal time for sleep; while the day is the time for activity. To be watchful is to be alert and ready to act in keeping with the needs of the times; while to be sober is to exercise self-control. People who sleep in the daytime, in the sense Paul uses the term here, live as if the day of judgment will never come. Both Jesus and Paul speak of this condition, and their words should help to emphasize the lesson which the apostle wants us to get, "But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21: 34-36; read also Luke 12: 45-48.)

"Let no man deceive you with empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is well pleasing unto the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them; for the things which are done by them in secret it is a shame even to speak of. But all things when they are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." (Eph. 5: 6-14.)

If people are going to live in the light, then there are some things which they should do, namely, "be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." The Interpreter's Bible notes that the Bible is

being superseded. Practically every one agrees that the Bible is a wonderful book, which enriches the mind and inspires the soul; but that is what we say about Browning's poetry, and Shakespeare's plays; we give them similar treatment, but seldom read them. How few congregations in the land are noted for their Bible knowledge—even the most familiar doctrines of the Scriptures must be carefully explained to the average group of Christians! (Cf. Heb. 5: 11-14.) How many church members read a single chapter of the Bible each day, or even one of the shorter epistles in a week? This neglect is not confined to the average Christian, but also to the leaders themselves, to an alarming degree. Yet there is hardly a member of the church who does not proclaim that it is by the word of the Lord that we must live and die!

The end of our faith, and the realization of our hope, are expressed in these words: "For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." Thus, whether we are alive, and watchful and sober, or dead in Christ, our lives should be united with our Lord. It is with this kind of teaching from the Holy Book, that we can encourage and build each other up. (Cf. Heb. 10: 24, 25.)

### A Closing Admonition

(1 Thess. 5: 12)

*But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.*

The aim of all Bible study should be to try to understand the thought which the writer was endeavoring to develop, and not simply to consider abstractly an isolated passage. Any effort at understanding a passage should be in the light of its context. The context of this section of the lesson text is as follows: "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. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-

hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all. See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, toward one another, and toward all." (1 Thess. 5: 12-15.)

Those who are familiar with the writings of the apostle Paul, are aware of the fact that he often had words of practical counsel for distinct classes of people; for he always knew the value of being specific. (Cf. for example, Tit. 2: 1-10.) It appears that the apostle was following that course in the passage just quoted. Verses 12, 13 clearly had the church in mind, in relation to its elders; while verses 14, 15 were apparently addressed to the elders themselves, in their relationship to the church. The remaining exhortations (verses 16-22) were applicable to all alike.

There are two injunctions in the church's attitude toward the elders, which should be noted, namely, (1) "to know them" and (2) "to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." To *know* the elders means to recognize their leadership, and respect them, or pay attention to them; while the idea in the injunction to *esteem*, is to hold them in high regard. Any member therefore who proceeds with the affairs of the church, without consulting the elders, shows disrespect both for them and their leadership; and that, of course, is in direct disobedi-

ence to God, who ordained them as elders and specified their work. It is the duty of elders to *admonish*; and it is equally the obligation of the brethren to heed the admonition.

There is no escape from personal decisions in the Christian religion; no one can drift to salvation with a companion, or even with a church. In art, in literature, or in ordinary morality, it is possible to possess something without any special effort. The atmosphere of cultural society, for example, holds in solution the knowledge and taste which have been gained by a few, and which may pass, in some measure, to those who are associated with them, even though these have studied and acquired very little. Any one who observes how some talk about a new book will readily see the process at work. But the supreme nature of religion, and its unique part in human development, are different, especially the religion of the New Testament. The religion of Christ demands high and sustained personal efforts, and the constant action of the will. Indeed, every spiritual gain must result from the vital activity of the individual mind choosing to enter, and to enter yet further, into the kingdom of divine revelation, faith, and obedience. (See Heb. 6: 11, 12; cf. 1 Cor. 15: 58.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give, time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What does the Bible teach with reference to watchfulness?

Discuss some of the examples of failure and success with reference to this which we have.

### The Golden Text

What important difference is noted in the rendering of the golden text in the King James and the American Standard Versions of the New Testament?

In what connection did Paul write the words of the golden text?

What did the apostle actually warn against in the passage we are now considering?

### The Time of the Lord's Coming Has Not Been Revealed

What usually happens when Christian hopes are vividly portrayed before the believer?

What are "times" and "seasons" and why is there no need to write about them?

How well had Paul apparently instructed the Thessalonian brethren? How do you know?

Why don't we need any extra-biblical teaching regarding such questions or any subject?

What is the Lord's plan for getting his people ready for a home with him in heaven?

What do the Scriptures teach with reference to the time of the Lord's second coming?

In what way should the Lord's people be affected toward this great event, or, What should be their feeling and attitude toward it?

### The Way for a Vigilant and Sober Life

In what way does Paul classify the people of the Lord in contrast with the people of the world?

What principal difference is seen in the two outlooks on life?

What do Jesus and Paul, generally speaking, teach with reference to these issues?

What does consistency demand with ref-

erence to people who propose to live in the light?  
What is generally true in this regard on the average?  
What do you think can be done to improve the situation?  
In what way does the apostle Paul express the end of our faith and the realization of our hope?  
How are Christians expected to encourage and build each other up?  
Why is it important for the Lord's people

to have their attention called to those things which will take place at the last day?  
A Closing Admonition  
What should be the principal aim of Bible study?  
How can this goal best be attained?  
What was Paul's purpose in writing the passage which serves as this section of the lesson text?  
What does it mean for the church to know their elders?

Lesson XI—June 14, 1970

PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Lesson Text  
2 Thess. 1: 1-12

1 Paul, and Sil-va'-nus, and Tim'-o-thy, unto the church of the Thes-sa-lo'-ni-ans in God our Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ;  
2 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.  
3 We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth;  
4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure;  
5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:  
6 If so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you,

7 And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Je'-sus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire,  
8 Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Je'-sus:  
9 Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might,  
10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.  
11 To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power;  
12 That the name of our Lord Je'-sus may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Je'-sus Christ.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth."* (2 Thess. 1: 3.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 17: 13-15.

Daily Bible Readings

- June 8. M..... Paul's Thankfulness (1 Thess. 1: 1-10)
- June 9. T..... Paul's Conduct (1 Thess. 2: 10-12)
- June 10. W..... Paul's Teaching (1 Thess. 4: 9-12)
- June 11. T..... Paul's Love (1 Thess. 5: 23-28)
- June 12. F..... Paul's Gospel (2 Thess. 2: 13-16)
- June 13. S..... Better World Promised (2 Pet. 3: 8-14)
- June 14. S..... Our Inheritance (Rev. 21: 1-7)

TIME.—Second Thessalonians was written around A.D. 51 or 52.  
PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.  
PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

When Jesus left this world to return to the Father, around twenty years before Paul established the church in Thessalonica, he promised to return at an indefinite date. This indefiniteness became the occasion for the conjectures of some of the early Christians, regarding the time of the Lord's coming, until the clear teaching of the apostles brought about a better understanding concerning the question. It is very evident that the subject of the time of the second coming of Christ was grossly misunderstood by some of the Thessalonian brethren; for in both of his epistles to them, Paul sought to correct their erroneous ideas regarding that event.

The apostle endeavored to show the Christians in that city, that those who die in Christ before the coming of the Lord, will not be deprived of the joys, which the Lord's people will experience when he comes again. (1 Thess. 4: 13-18.) But, judging from that which Paul says about the question in the second letter, it is quite evident that his first epistle did not settle the misapprehensions regarding his teaching on the second coming of Christ. It further appears that there were some in the Thessalonian church who were determined to misunderstand, or to misrepresent, the apostle regarding this question. They even claimed a divine revelation, or maybe a word or an epistle

from Paul himself, as to what he had taught with reference to the subject, which was different from the message which he had ordered to be read to the church in Thessalonica. (1 Thess. 5: 27; 2 Thess. 2: 2.)

And so, with this kind of a situation before him, Paul wrote the Thessalonian brethren a second letter, in which he denied the claims which were made by some, and called their attention to that which he had told them about the subject, while he was with them in person. This plainly showed that he had not taught them that the coming of Christ was at hand; he could not have taught that, for the simple reason that he did not know just when the event would take place, in the very same sense that Jesus could say that he did not know when he would come. (Matt. 24: 36.) But Paul did say, in fact, that the falling away would precede the second coming. (2 Thess. 2: 3-12.) There is a vast difference between saying that something would happen before the day of the Lord arrives, and in saying that Jesus would come at a certain time. The apostle was also outspoken against those brethren who had quit working, very likely because they were expecting the imminent return of the Lord, and had become idlers and busybodies, as we shall see further on in these studies-

## The Golden Text

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

## The Text Explained

### Apostolic Greeting and Thanksgiving

(2 Thess. 1: 1-4)

*Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The form of greeting in First Thessalonians is the shortest in any of Paul's epistles, with the one in Colossians holding a close second for brevity. The greeting in the epistle we are now considering is somewhat longer, but there is no material dif-

ference in the scope of its significance; for the simple reason that what is actually said here, is implied in First Thessalonians. Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy joined with Paul in the greeting, as they did in the first letter; but there is no evidence that they had anything to do with the actual writing of the letter. We do not know how the apostle received the additional information, which he apparently had, regarding the condition of the church in Thessalonica, when he wrote his second letter to the brethren there: but it is possible that Timothy or Silas, or

maybe both, took the first letter to the Thessalonians; and if so, the additional information came to Paul when he, or they, returned to Corinth. The inclusion of the names of both Silas and Timothy in the address and greeting of both letters, implies that they were present with Paul when both epistles were written.

*We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure.*

With the exception of Galatians, Titus, and Hebrews, Paul does not go very far in his letters, before he mentions "thanks" or "thanksgiving" in one way or another. This attitude and practice is characteristic of a dedicated and hopeful child of God. In the case now before us, the apostle refers to the faith, love, and patience or steadfastness as the basis for his thanksgiving. As indicated in an earlier lesson, the church in Thessalonica was a persecuted church; but it appears that the brethren there, on the whole, were not "moved by these afflictions." (1 Thess. 3: 3.) Harold J. Ockenga refers to the church in Thessalonica as the church in tribulation. That was certainly true of that body of believers, but they were not unique in that respect. (Cf. Rev. 2: 8-11.) If the church in Smyrna was a suffering church, but it was also a purified church. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12; Mal. 3: 1-3.)

The church in Thessalonica was not the first church of the Lord to suffer persecution (cf. 1 Thess. 2: 14-16); but it was the first church, so far as the record goes, to have a letter written to it regarding such trials. And with this in mind, it is probably not out of order to say that the Thessalonian church became a kind of pattern for other churches, in this respect, among the Gentile followers of Christ. Persecution and tribulation were expected during the early years of the church; for Jesus clearly predicted such a condition. (Cf. John 15: 18-20.) And if one will read the record of

that age, that is, the age during which the history of the New Testament was in the making, he will have no difficulty in seeing that suffering was almost, if not entirely, the general rule. There was, however, a basic cause for all of this, namely, When the entire life pattern of a people is changed, and breaks with the traditional surroundings, the hostility of the opposition is almost certain to be aroused.

But when one considers the basic nature of the churches which the early disciples of the Lord founded, it will be easy to see that they did, indeed, become the sources of a new, and higher, culture. They did, in fact, actually introduce a disintegrating principle into the pagan culture of Rome, and laid the foundation for an entirely new way of life in Christ. Old castes and relationships, along with many of the social customs of the day, would be shattered; and men and women of unequal rank and culture would become brothers and sisters in Christ. (Col. 3: 11.) With this kind of situation clearly in the making, it was perfectly natural that the kingdom of darkness be shaken to its foundations, and that the opposition of the evil one be aroused in all of his fury. Persecution has indeed been the lot of the Lord's people all through the ages, but not always with the same degree of intensity with which the pagan culture of the first century reacted to the Christian message of that day.

### **A Reckoning Day Is Coming**

(2 Thess. 1: 5-10)

*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: if so be that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire-rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be*



*marvelled at in all them that believe (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.*

The entire paragraph of 2 Thess. 1: 3-12, in the version from which the lesson text is taken, the American Standard Version, is expressed in two sentences—verses 3-10 and verses 11, 12. Other versions, however, divide the paragraph just referred to into several sentences. Phillips, for example, puts verses 3, 4, 5-10, and 11, 12 into three separate paragraphs, with shorter sentences. He renders the section of our lesson text, now under consideration, in these words:

"These qualities show how justly the judgment of God works out in your case. Without doubt he intends to use your suffering to make you worthy of his kingdom, yet his justice will one day repay trouble to those who have troubled you, and peace to all of us who, like you, have suffered. This judgment will issue eventually in the final denouement of the personal coming of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of his power. It will bring full justice in dazzling flame upon those who have refused to know God or to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their punishment will be eternal exclusion from the radiance of the face of the Lord, and the glorious majesty of his power. But to those whom he has made holy his coming will mean splendor unimaginable. It will be a breath-taking wonder to all who believe—including you, for you have believed the message that we have given you."

Paul calls the unflinching attitude of the Thessalonian brethren, in their trials and tribulations, an indication, or, positive proof, of God's righteous judgment. The very fact that God makes it possible for his people to endure such terrible sufferings, clearly indicates that he is a righteous God; and who, in his own good time, will manifest this righteousness in a final judgment, which will openly declare that his faithful servants are worthy of a place in his eternal kingdom. The Thessalonian Christians had demonstrated, and were demonstrating, their faith, love, and patience, in the midst of their persecutions, and Paul wanted

them to know that God was not unrighteous to forget that which they had done in his service. (Cf. Heb. 6:

10.) No one will ever regret the fact that his faith, love, and steadfastness are acceptable to God.

But just as certainly as the wicked persecute to the righteous, just that certain will they be punished. Affliction will be meted out to them who afflict God's people; while rest, or relief, for Christians, from their persecutions and eternal rest with all the righteous in the world which is to come. This vindication and eternal peace will be the lot of the righteous, when Jesus comes again. "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given to them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course." (Rev. 6: 9-11.)

The certainty of the Lord's retribution, together with the vindication of the righteous, is the basic reason for steadfastness, or patience, on the part of those who believe in the Lord, and love him with their whole being. R. Gregor Smith points out that the patience of men has in it, besides endurance, the quality of expectation, waiting for something to happen, for "someone to help." He goes on to say that with Christians human endurance is quickened by more than expectation: patience in the midst of tribulation is now one link in a chain, which leads through to triumphant faith in the love of God. (Rom. 5: 3-5; cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10.) The *patience of Christ* (2 Thess. 3: 5) is also available to the child of God, in connection with his victory over the evildoer. The "patience and the faith of the saints," therefore, is more than endurance of persecution, or passive acquiescence in temporary evils. It is a lively outgoing power

of faith, an active energy, rather than a passive resignation. This is true because patience is an expectation which has been fulfilled in Christ, and is thus perfected, and is also continually merging into hope and faith in the coming Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Edited by Alan Richardson, p. 164f.)

The picture of the day of judgment is graphically set forth in this section of the lesson text. It will be a day of great rejoicing, on the part of the Lord's people (cf. 2 Pet. 3: 10-13); but a terrible day of vengeance on the part of the wicked.

"And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6: 12-17; cf. Rev. 20: 11-15.)

Paul states the doom of the wicked in these words: "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

William Hendriksen notes that the picture which Paul depicts is very vivid. We can almost see the angelic host, with the Lord himself in the center. However, we should remember that his not merely a representation; it is a reality! Dr. Hendriksen goes on to say that it is by no means established that the

mass of fire, with its flames shooting in all directions, is a *mere* "symbol" of judgment. It will not be possible for us to know to what extent some of the description must be taken literally, and some figuratively, until the events become actual history; and it is useless to speculate. However, it is well to keep in mind that which Peter says about the destructive fire, in 2 Pet. 3: 10-12. But whatever is to be taken literally, and whatever, symbolically, we know that the symbol is far more terrible (or far more glorious) than the symbol itself. Human language is stretched almost to the breaking point, in order to convey the terrible character of the coming of the Lord, as that coming relates to the wicked.

The objects of the wrath of God at the last day are referred to in two ways, namely, (1) those who know not God, and (2) those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. To know God is to know him as the only true God, as distinguished from all false gods. It is to know his will, his holiness, his hatred of sin, and his saving intent toward all men. The people referred to here as not knowing God, are evidently the type of people referred to in Rom. 1: 18-32. Those people could have known God, and they are therefore without excuse; for they refused to have God in their knowledge. When people know God as they should, they are going to make every effort to reverence him as such. The writer of Hebrews makes this timely observation: "For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 30, 31.)

The fundamental facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15: 1-4), and these facts must be believed by every one who is to enjoy the salvation which the Lord offers to the lost. (Cf. John 8: 24; Mark 16:

15, 16.) The believer must change his mind regarding sin, he must have another mind regarding sin, think differently regarding it, reconsider. This is what the Bible calls repentance, and it is exactly that which the prodigal son did regard-

ing his sins. (Luke 15: 11-24.) The penitent believer must then do that which the Lord requires of him, in order to be saved. (Cf. Heb. 5: 8, 9; Acts 22: 10, 16; Mark 16: 16.) When people believe the gospel message, repent of their sins, and do that which the Lord commands them to do, they obey the gospel. (Cf. Acts 10: 47, 48; Rom. 6: 17, 18.) The *form*, that is the "mold" or pattern (see marginal note) of teaching which the Romans obeyed, is set forth in Rom. 6: 3, 4. (Cf. Acts 2: 37-41.)

Those people who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus, "shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the fact of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day." The expression "eternal destruction" does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; but the two words, taken separately, are found often in the Scriptures. The basic meaning of the term from which we have "eternal" is *duration for the period indicated*; and inasmuch as the reference in the text is to the world which is to come, the destruction will never have an end. The punishment of the wicked therefore will never cease. The same Greek word for "eternal" (*aionios*) is found in Matthew 25: 46, and is used to indicate the duration of both the *punishment* of the wicked, and the *life* of the righteous. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Thus, if one never ends, neither does the other. This is a terrible truth to contemplate; but it is a truth which no one can rightfully deny.

The original term for "destruction" (*olethros*) literally means ruin or death; and since death always involves a *separation*, the implication is that the sinner will be forever separated from God, who is the source of all life. (Cf. Gen. 3: 22-24; Rev. 22: 1-5.) "Eternal destruction *from the face of the Lord* and from the glory of his might." The passage just cited in Revelation says, "And they shall see his face."

This is the exact opposite of the fate of the wicked.

### Another Prayer for the Thessalonians

(2 Thess. 1: 11-12.)

*To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfil every desire of goodness and every work of faith, with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus may be gloried in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is both interesting and profitable to go through the two letters which Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, and note the number of times he mentions prayer, or actually specifies the content of the prayers which he offered, and was continuing to offer, for those brethren. It is also helpful to observe the particular places where he inserts the record of his prayers for them. In the case now before us, the apostle's reference to prayer for the young church in Thessalonica lies between that which he says regarding two great events of tremendous proportions, namely, (1) the coming of Christ in judgment at the last day, and (2) his crushing defeat of the man of sin. We shall have more about this latter event in next week's lesson, the Lord willing.

"To which end we also pray always for you" refers back to verse 5, namely, "to the end that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God." (Read again verses 5 through 10.) No one can read the two letters which Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, without reaching the conclusion that the church, on the whole, was faithful to the Lord, and was continuing their growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ; and with this fact in mind, no thoughtful person can fail to see something of the significance of the apostle's prayer for them, at this point in his letter to them. If it were not possible for them to fall from the Lord's favor, then there would be no point in praying for their safety; but Paul knew that the evil one was always on the trail of faithful Christians, and it was for this reason that he never ceased to pray for the young disciples in Thessalonica. Some of

them had already succumbed to the tempter, as may be seen by reading

chapter 3 of the letter we are now considering.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give, time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What probable reason did the early Christians have for speculating about the Lord's second coming?

In what way was the issue finally settled, insofar as New Testament teaching is concerned?

What, apparently, was Paul's reason for writing Second Thessalonians?

### Apostolic Greeting and Thanksgiving

How does the form of greeting here compare with that in Paul's other epistles?

Who joined with Paul in greeting the Thessalonian disciples and why?

In what way did Paul learn of the unsatisfactory condition in the Thessalonian church?

What was the immediate, and the overall, purpose Paul had in writing all of his letters?

What place did "thanks" and "thanksgiving" have in Paul's life, and how do we know?

What effect did persecution, generally speaking, have on the early churches of the Lord?

Why was this true?

What unique place does the church in Thessalonica hold in this respect?

Why is the world so bent on persecuting the Lord's people?

### A Reckoning Day Is Coming

What form of sentence structure did Paul often employ in his writing?

Why is it easier to get the meaning of a literary composition, if the sentences are relatively short?

In what way is the righteousness of God manifested in the midst of persecution?

What promise has the Lord made for his people as they endure such trials?

What noble traits did the Thessalonian brethren demonstrate as they suffered for Christ's sake?

What will be the certain fate of wicked persecutors and why is this so?

What will be the lot of the righteous who endure them?

When will the vindication of the righteous come?

What is involved in the term "patience"? Why is this true?

Cite and discuss some of the New Testament passages which describe the day of judgment.

What does the New Testament say about the doom of the wicked?

In what way does the apostle Paul set forth the coming of Christ at the last day?

What are the people who will be lost in eternity?

What does it mean to "know God" and to "obey the gospel of Christ"?

What are the fundamental facts of the gospel?

Give a detailed description of the process by which a person is saved from his past sins.

In what way does Paul describe the punishment which the wicked will suffer?

What is the meaning and significance of "eternal destruction"?

### Another Prayer for the Thessalonians

What emphasis did Paul place on prayer throughout his epistles to the Thessalonians?

What prayer did he offer for them at this point and why?

## Lesson XII—June 21, 1970

# THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS

## Lesson Text

### 2 Thess. 2: 1-12

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him;

2 To the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand;

3 Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it *will not be*, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,

4 He that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God

or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only *there is one* that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his

mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming;

9 *Even he*, whose coming is according to the works of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; be-

cause they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Whereunto he called you through our gospel."* (2 Thess. 2: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Thess. 2: 13-17.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 15.	M.....	Apostasy Possible (1 Chron. 28: 1-9)
June 16.	T.....	Division from Within (Acts 20: 28-35)
June 17.	W.....	Warning of the Spirit (1 Tim. 4: 1-10)
June 18.	T.....	Some Love Error (2 Tim. 4: 1-6)
June 19.	F.....	Wicked to Be Destroyed (Job 31: 1-3)
June 20.	S.....	Wicked to Go into Sheol (Psalm 9: 1-7)
June 21.	S.....	Messiah's Mission (Isa. 42: 1-7)

TIME.—Second Thessalonians was written around A.D. 51 or 52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

### Introduction

Even a cursory reading of the two epistles which Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians, will enable one to see that one of the apostle's primary concerns in writing, was with reference to the second coming of Christ and some of the events connected with it. Paul had evidently done some basic teaching on those subjects, while he was there in person, which stirred the thinking of the Christians; and after he got away, their thoughts led them into some false conclusions regarding the apostle's teaching. We saw in a previous lesson that at least some of the brethren were led to think that if any died before the coming of Christ, it would be at least questionable as to whether the dead could participate in the joys which the living would experience when Christ comes again. Paul corrected that false conception in the closing part of chapter 4, of the first epistle.

But it appears that another and more harmful conclusion was reached by some of the Thessalonian brethren, after Paul wrote his first letter to the church in that city, namely, the imminence of the Lord's second coming, which led some of

them to think that the event was so near, that it would be well for them to give up their work, and simply await the Lord's appearance. This was a fundamental misconception, and the situation required another letter from Paul, in order to set them straight on this issue. Meanwhile, the brethren in Thessalonica continued to suffer persecution from the wicked opposition, and the apostle, in order to encourage them in their trials and tribulations, gave them a "preview" of the final doom of the ungodly, and the glorious reward of the righteous, as we saw in last week's lesson.

The question of the "time element," insofar as it is possible for anything to be said on that subject (cf. Matt. 24: 36), is set forth by Paul in the lesson for today, along with that which will actually take place when Christ comes. The apostle Paul, when all of that which he wrote is taken into consideration, had as much, if not more, to say regarding eschatological questions, as any other writer of the New Testament Scriptures. And what is true of the doctrine of the last things (that is the meaning of eschatology), is also true of the incarnation.

(Cf. Phil. 2: 5-8; 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19; Gal. 4: 4; Heb. 1: 3, 6, 8; 2: 14, 17; 5: 7; 10: 5.) In fact, in one of his later letters, Paul sets forth an over-all view of the Lord's mission to earth, and his return to heaven, in a single verse, namely,

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. (1 Tim. 3: 16.)

### The Golden Text

*"Whereunto he called you through our gospel."* The principal value of the passage which serves as the golden text for today's lesson, is seen in the contrast which is suggested between the lost and the saved. The preceding paragraph is the principal text for the lesson; and in it, as we shall see later, the apostle Paul gives a panoramic view of the great apostasy, and the final doom of the wicked. And then, in the next paragraph, he sets forth the state of the righteous, or, the state of those who had accepted the gospel which he had so recently preached unto them. The full context of the passage now under consideration reads as follows:

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours." Paul will have more to say regarding the manner in which the Thessalonian brethren received their

information, upon which to base their faith and practice, in the principal part of the text for today's lesson.

This was the apostle's way of consoling the church, after presenting the dark picture referred to in the discussion of the terrible end of the human race here upon the earth. The coming of Christ presents a blessed hope (cf. Tit. 2: 1, 14) for believers; but there are some awe-inspiring events which will precede and accompany it. Harold J. Ockenga, in commenting on this passage, says, "Let us never fall into the practice of taking pleasure in the prophesied terrors, thinking that the saints will escape them. This little flock was saved out of heathenism, was facing persecution, was struggling with problems in its own membership and needed some real consolation and encouragement. Thus Paul presented God, not only as the terrible God of judgment, but the wonderful God of comfort, who knows our sorrows and who cares for us. This passage of scripture injects a sense of light, hope, and confidence, into the gloomy picture which had been drawn concerning the end-time events."

### The Text Explained

#### Events Which Will Precede Our

#### Lord's Return

(2 Thess. 2: 1-4)

*Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that*

*is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.*

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, he carefully explained to them that both the righteous living and the righteous dead, following their resurrection from the dead, would together "be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4: 13-17.) The purpose of these words was for the comfort of those who had lost friends or loved ones by death; and if we take into consideration the fellowship which faithful

Christians enjoy, it is easy to see that the words were for the comfort of the entire church. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (Verse 18.)

The apostle then wrote: "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape." This, however, applied only to the unrighteous; for the Lord's people would be ready and watching for his coming. (1 Thess. 5: 1-6.) This shows that Paul had carefully taught the Thessalonians regarding the last day of history. But, as has previously been noted, at least some of the brethren there had misunderstood, or had been misinformed, with reference to the time of the Lord's coming; and had concluded that that great day was about to dawn.

It was against the background just set forth, that Paul wrote the words of the portion of the lesson text now under consideration. "The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him," is the same as "the day of the Lord," which at least some of them thought was "just at hand." This was the issue which the apostle Paul sought to correct, in the text which we have for today's lesson. It appears that they were both shaken from their mind, and troubled, by the information which they apparently had received and accepted. It seems from the text itself that Paul was not certain, as to the source of the alleged teaching—"either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand." The apostle was probably more concerned with the injurious effect which the false teaching had on the church in Thessalonica, than with its origin; and it was probably for that reason that he sought to correct the false impressions, rather than spend his time and effort in tracking down the misguided teacher. Some Bible students are of the opinion that a spurious letter was sent in Paul's

name; and it was for that reason that he autographed all of his epistles, from that time and onward. (Cf. 2 Thess. 3: 17.)

The entire lesson text for today's study is one of the great eschatological passages in the New Testament, and it should be carefully considered by both teacher and student, in all of its details. The passage closely parallels Rev. 20: 1-10; and if it is studied in the light of that passage, it will be much easier to arrive at Paul's meaning. The angel who bound Satan (Rev. 20: 1-3) was evidently Christ himself, since both he and inspired writers made that claim for him. (Cf. Gen. 3: 15; Matt. 12: 22-29; John 12: 27-33; 16: 7-11; Col. 2: 13-15; Eph. 4: 8; Heb. 2: 14, 15.) The original word for "bind" in Matt. 12: 29 is from the same root, as "bound" in Rev. 20: 2.

The period referred to as the thousand years reign of Christ, or, the millennium, is described (1) as being the period between the binding of Satan, and his being loosed for a little time (Rev. 20: 1-13); (2) it is the period during which the power of Satan to deceive the nations is limited (Rev. 20: 3, 7, 8); (3) it is the period during which the souls of martyred Christians shall reign with Christ (Rev. 20: 4); and (4) it is the period of the first resurrection (Rev. 20: 5, 6). The original word for "should deceive" is in the subjunctive mood, which represents the denoted action or state, not as a fact, but as contingent or possible. "That he should receive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished," implies that it is not *necessary* for any one to be deceived during that period; or, no responsible person will be at the mercy of the devil during the thousand year reign of Christ.

The passages cited above make it plain that Christ accomplished the binding of Satan, when he arose from the dead; and the fact that the millennium is the period between the binding of the devil and his being loosed for a little season, just before the end of this world-order, the inescapable conclusion is that the millennium, that is, the thousand year reign of Christ, and the Christian dispensation are one and the same thing. The loosing of

Satan at the close of the age is described in these words: "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20: 7-10.)

And so, with this brief analysis of Rev. 20: 1-10 before us, let us compare the statements of Paul and John, as set forth in the lesson text and the passage just cited. Paul states emphatically that a falling away and the revelation of the great antagonist shall precede the coming of Christ at the last day. This is to say that efforts to lead God's people astray will be made, evidently throughout the dispensation (cf. Matt. 24: 23-28), which will finally culminate in the manifestation of the antichrist. (2 John 7; 1 John 2: 18-22; 4: 1-3.) The Lord has made provisions for an acceptable life, on the part of his people; but is essential that they do their part, if they are to overcome the artful deceivers who are ever present. (Cf. Heb. 4: 14-16; 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 5-8; Eph. 6: 10-18.) The devil, let it be repeated, is held in restraint, insofar as those who want to do God's will are concerned; and it is never necessary therefore that any such person be deceived. (Cf. 1 John 4: 4; 5: 4, 5; Rom. 8: 31-39; John 7: 17; Phil. 3: 15, 16.)

Many efforts have been made to identify the "man of sin," or the "son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." (Cf. Dan. 11: 36.) Some have thought that the reference was to such blasphemous emperors of

Rome, as Caligula and Nero, while other profess to see him as the pope of the Roman hierarchy.

### The Mystery of Lawlessness Is Already at Work

(2 Thess. 2:5-7)

*Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way.*

The inference here is that Paul had thoroughly taught the Thessalonian brethren the truth regarding the matters now under consideration; but evidently then, as now, it was relatively easy for people to forget that which was said, especially when they begin to think for themselves, or come under the influence of other teaching on the same subject. The Thessalonian Christians knew why the man of sin had not been made manifest—"And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season."

This section of the lesson text is rendered by Phillips in these words: "I expect you remember now how I talked about this when I was with you. You will probably also remember how I used to talk about a 'restraining power' which would operate until the time should come for the emergence of this man. Evil is already insidiously at work, but its activities are restricted until what I have called the 'restraining power' is removed."

Most commentators regard Paul's language here as being cryptic, and it indeed may be. "That which restraineth" is neuter, while "one that restraineth" is masculine. Efforts have been made to identify the Roman Empire the restraining power. The latter passage plainly teaches that Christ is the one who chained the devil, and that certainly *restricts* the latter's activities. Satan cannot make his supreme effort to deceive the nations, until he is loosed from his prison. Christ who holds the power over the devil satisfies the masculine requirement, while the power by which Satan is



held, considered abstractly, takes care of the neuter. "His own season" refers to the time when Satan will again have the full use of his deceptive powers, in his effort to keep people from obeying the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

### The Last Great Battle

(2 Thess. 2: 8-12)

*And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Some think that this is Paul's version of that which John refers to as the battle of Armageddon. (See Rev. 16: 12-21; 19: 11-21; 20: 7-10.) Both apostles were writing about the "last things," and were evidently referring to the same persons and events. The apostle Paul says that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2: 9); and it appears that the antichrist will likewise be the embodiment of all that which enters into the person and character of Satan. The deeds of Christ, during his earthly ministry, were made possible by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12: 28; and, in a similar manner, the coming of the

antichrist will be "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish"; which is another way of saying that he will be fully inspired and activated by the devil.

It was pointed out earlier in this lesson, that no one is at the mercy of the devil, since Christ limits his power to tempt; or, to state the same thing in another way, no one can or will be deceived by Satan, unless that person is unwilling to listen to the Lord. Jesus himself says, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak for myself." (John 7: 17.) Here is an indication of character before conduct, or an earnest desire to obey God, even before one knows what the Father's will is. This implies that such a person is sympathetic with the divine will. Vincent notes that "sympathy with the will of God is a condition of understanding it"; while Robertson points out that "there must be moral harmony between man's purpose and God's will." He then quotes Westcott as saying, "If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding." (Cf. Matt. 11: 25, 26; Phil. 3: 15.) Only those who tune in on the proper channel, will be able to get the message. When people refuse to receive the *love* of the truth, they are in line for a "working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." It is difficult for the truth to get into one's heart through a closed mind.

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

What primary subject did Paul give special attention to in his Thessalonian epistles?

In what way did some of them at least react to that which he said?

Why was it essential that Paul write his second letter to those brethren?

What basic issue did he discuss in the lesson text for today?

Discuss some of the things which Paul said regarding the incarnation and the events at the last day.

#### The Golden Text

What point was Paul making in the paragraph from which the golden text is taken?

What was the contrast between believers and unbelievers with reference to the gospel?

In what way are the righteous affected by the terrors of the judgment?

#### Events Which Will Precede Our Lord's Return

In what way did Paul seek to provide a means of comfort for the Thessalonians in his first letter?

Why did those Christians have no need

for instruction concerning times and seasons?  
 Into what misunderstanding had some of the brethren there fallen?  
 What may have been the cause of their misunderstanding and what practice, apparently, grew out of it?  
 What other scriptures seem to throw light on the lesson text for today?  
 When, why, by whom, and for how long was Satan bound?  
 When, then, will the terrible events of the lesson text take place?  
 Who is the man of sin referred to in this section of the lesson text?

#### The Mystery of Lawlessness Is Already at Work

Why, apparently, had the Thessalonian brethren forgot their earlier teaching on this subject?  
 What was the mystery of lawlessness and in what way it already at work?

When will the "season" come for the revealing of the evil one?  
 What is the devil presently doing to accomplish his purpose, and in what way should the child of God react to both it and him?

#### The Last Great Battle

What may be expected of the devil's wrath just prior to the Lord's second coming?  
 What principal ways will Satan employ to deceive the nations?  
 In what will the deception of the people consist?  
 What will be the eternal fate of the evil one's agents in this great deception?  
 In what way may people today keep the devil from deceiving them?  
 What is absolutely essential to an understanding of the will of the Lord?  
 What effect will preconceived ideas have in this respect? Give reasons for your answer.

### Lesson XIII—June 28, 1970

## DEALING WITH THE DISORDERLY

### Lesson Text

#### 2 Thess. 3: 6-17

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Je'-sus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you:

9 Not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an example unto you, that ye should imitate us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat.

11 For we hear of some that walk

among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Je'-sus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

14 And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed.

15 And *yet* count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

17 The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Finally, brethren, pray for us."* (2 Thess. 3: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Thess. 3: 1-5.

### Daily Bible Readings

June 22. M.....	Discipline Commanded (1 Cor. 5: 10-13)
June 23. T.....	Unruly to Be Warned (1 Thess. 5: 12-22)
June 24. W.....	Dealing with the Disorderly (Rom. 6: 17-20)
June 25. T.....	Ungodly Men (2 Tim. 2: 14-23)
June 26. F.....	Some Mouths to Be Stopped (Tit. 1: 5-16)
June 27. S.....	A Factious Man Refuse (Tit. 3: 8-14)
June 28. S.....	Conditions in Corinth (2 Cor. 12: 14-21)

TIME.—Second Thessalonians was written around A.D. 51 or 52.

PLACE.—The epistle was written in Corinth.

PERSONS.—Paul and the brethren to whom he wrote.

## Introduction

The question of dealing with the disorderly is a constituent portion of the over-all subject of discipline. Discipline necessarily includes dealing with the disorderly. It will be easier for one to understand the subject of this lesson, therefore, if he will first get firmly fixed in his mind a correct view of the basic meaning of discipline. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines *discipline* as "training which corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects." This is practically that which Paul sets forth in one of the great New Testament passages on discipline, 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." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17; cf. Heb. 12: 7-13.)

Man is described in the New Testament as a triune being, that is, a being with a spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess. 5: 23); and he is capable of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual growth (Luke 2: 52). This means, of course, that his training should include all of these aspects. We have already seen the divine plan for training or discipline, in the passage from Paul, quoted in the preceding paragraph; and a practical way in which the Lord's method of training and developing his people, may be learned from many parts of the New Testament. For example, Paul, after affirming that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men," goes on to say that this grace which saves people from their past or alien sins, also instructs the saved, "to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this world." (Tit. 2: 11, 12.) We are first taught what to do; our shortcomings, failures, and positive sins are pointed out; and we are then taught what to do to get them corrected or forgiven. This process is then continued, over and over again, until we grow into the like-

ness of the Lord with whom we hope to dwell for ever and ever, in the world which is to come. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18; Gal. 4: 19.)

There is, as some one has pointed out, a point in our lives when discipline ends; a time when God takes a man as he is, not for probation, but for judgment. When or where that point is reached we dare not say of others; for it is exceedingly doubtful if we know it of our own selves. However, we should always keep in view the dread possibility that the day is nearer to us than we may think. God is both willing and able to train us for the best in this life, and in the world to come; but even with all of his greatness and goodness, and we say this with the utmost reverence, he cannot make of any one that which he does not want to be. But if we are willing to commit our ways to God, and obey to the best of our ability, that which he has ordained for us, we can justly hope for a result far beyond our ability to ask or think.

We do not like to think that God ever fails; but if we are careful readers of the divine record, we must admit that there are many tragic failures along the way; due to no fault of his, but solely to man's unwillingness to cooperate with him. A classic example of this is seen in the Lord's lament for Jerusalem, (cf. Matt. 23: 37ff.) "Ye would not!" We do not know how many efforts the Lord made to turn the people of that city toward God; but we do know that the time finally arrived when no further effort would be made. He left them to their own way. We can imagine that the sun, on that final day, was slowly setting; the evening lights lingered on the towers; and then the solemn hush of twilight fell over the city, as he moved away into the deepening gloom, into the shadow of the cross. That has been called the greatest failure in history; but we know that not all was lost. This is true, because it was

love that failed; but love's failures are life's triumphs. (Cf. Acts 2.)

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have  
Thine own way!  
Thou art the potter; I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after thy  
will,  
While I am waiting, yielded and  
still.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have  
thine own way!

Search me and try me, Master,  
today!  
Whiter than snow, Lord, wash me  
just now,  
As in thy presence humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have  
thine own way!  
Hold o'er my being absolute sway!  
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall  
see

Christ only, always, living in me!  
—*Adelaide Pollard.*

### The Golden Text

*"Finally, brethren, pray for us."* Prayer is one of the great and prolonged subjects of the Scriptures. The practice of prayer apparently began in the days of Seth. "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enosh. Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah." (Gen. 4: 26.) "To call up on the name of Jehovah" must have included prayer, to say the least of it. Prayer may be described as the sense of a conscious appeal to the Divine; or, a conscious effort to hold a communion with Jehovah. If one is honest with God and himself, in his prayer, he will be endeavoring to learn the will of God for himself and others; and if he will carefully consider God's response to his prayers, it will not be difficult for him to learn something of the will of God for him. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

Prayer, as set forth in the Bible, takes many forms, as for example, simple communion (Mark 1: 35); petition (Phil. 4: 6, 7); "wrestling" (Gen. 32: 22-32; cf. Luke 22: 39-46); praise and thanksgiving (Luke 1: 46-55, 67-79); and intercessory prayer (John 17.) The last aspect of prayer, just mentioned, is the phase of the question involved in the words of the golden text. Paul frequently prayed for the Thessalonian Christians; and now, as he nears the close of his second letter to them, he requests that they pray for him. The Lord wants people to pray for themselves; but he also wants them to pray for others. As the apostle Paul neared the close of the Ephesian letter, he wrote, "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." (Eph. 6: 18-20.)

James Hastings, in commenting on the passage just quoted, says, "The duty of praying for others is one of the obligations which grows out of the great law, which makes it impossible for any of us to live an independent and isolated life. (Cf. Matt. 6: 9-13; Rom. 14: 7) We are members of one one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12-27); and we should be willing to share the fortunes of each one. We are not fighting a solitary battle; instead, we are members of the army of the Lord. It is our duty therefore to pray for each other; and for all the saints. Paul knew the value of intercessory prayer. He knew that by the prayers of God's people he would be able to have a clearness and vigor of thought, as well as a fearlessness of spirit, which, apart from their prayers, he might not possess."

It may be that one is far removed from the battle lines, with no opportunity for winning great moral victories; but no normal person is beyond the range of intercessory prayer for those who are bearing the heat and burdens of the day. Any faithful Christian can pray for God's people, in whatever condition they may be. W. Y. Fullerton, in his book, *God's High Way*, notes that it is far more important to pray for the saints, than to contend with

them. And so, in the well-known words of Tennyson,

Pray for my soul. More things are  
wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of.  
Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night  
and day.

For what are men better than sheep  
or goats

That nourish a blind life within the  
brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands  
of prayer

Both for themselves and those who  
call them Friend?

## The Text Explained

### The Lord's Doctrine of Separation

(2 Thess. 3: 6-9)

*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us.*

The apostle Paul, in verse 4 of the preceding paragraph, said to the Thessalonians, 'And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command.' Those brethren, along with all others who were saved from sin, had been redeemed by Christ; and they were therefore under obligation to live according to the principles of Christianity, both with reference to physical activities and spiritual service. It was pointed out in a previous lesson, that some of the brethren in Thessalonica had reached the wrong conclusion regarding the Lord's second coming; and had, as a result, quit working and had become busybodies. That kind of attitude, with its resultant conduct, could and would be characterized with grave and damaging consequences, both as to the individual involved, and the church as a whole in its relationship with the people of the world who lived about them.

Any one who is familiar with the history of the early church, is aware of the fact that its remarkable growth was due, in a large measure, to the lives which the Christians themselves lived. W. H. Carnegie

has pointed out that the best people of that day, that is, the best people of the world, were dissatisfied with their social surroundings, and were longing for something better. And while in that frame of mind, they gradually became aware of the fact that the very thing they were looking for was right in their midst, that is, little communities (congregations or churches) of men and women, living together as members of a united family live, namely, tending to their sick, caring for their poor, teaching their ignorant, consigning their dead with reverent hopefulness to the grave, always ready to place their beneficent activities at the disposal of those outside their own fold, who were in need of and desired them. Thoughtful people were attracted by that kind of living, and the attraction gradually became stronger, till at length they found themselves swept into the current of the new movement, and ready to live and die in promoting it.

Paul, of course knew the dreadful effects of disorderly conduct on the part of the Lord's people, and he, accordingly, took drastic steps in dealing with the offenders. He did not merely advise or exhort that the faithful in the Lord act with reference to those whose lives were in violation with the Lord's will; he *commanded* them to act and to act decisively. No child of God has the right to manifest an indifferent attitude toward the disorderly; he has a duty to perform himself, or he will become disorderly—in another area. The term "withdraw" is from a Greek word *stello*, which occurs in the New Testament only here and in 2 Cor. 8: 20. It is defined by Arndt-Gingrich to mean keep away, stand aloof from someone (2 Thess. 3: 6); avoiding or trying to avoid (2 Cor. 8: 20). Thus, when Paul commanded the Thessalonian brethren

ren to withdraw themselves from the disorderly, he did not mean what we understand by excommunication; but rather to refuse to associate with them, while they continue their disorderly conduct. (Cf. 1 Cor. 5: 9-11.)

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 temptations to wrong doing in their way. The original word for "mark" does not mean to brand one with some kind of an identifying mark; but to "*look out for those who cause divisions*"; so that they may be avoided. (See Arndt-Gingrich, article, *skopeō*; cf. Luke 11: 35; 2 Cor. 4: 18; Gal. 6: 1; Phil. 2: 4; 3: 17, where the same original word is found.) The fact that the definite article is before both "divisions" and "occasions of stumbling" in the Greek, implies some well known situations, possibly the work of Judaizers, was in the apostle's mind; and he wanted the Roman brethren to avoid or turn away from such trouble-makers.

The original word for "turn away" *ekklinō* (Rom. 16: 17), found also in Rom. 3: 12 and 1 Pet. 3:

11, means practically the same as *stello* in 2 Thess. 3: 6 and 2 Cor. 8: 20. The term in 2 Thess. 3: 6, as we have already seen, means to "keep away, stand aloof from someone," while the word in Rom. 16: 17 is defined to mean to "turn away from someone or something . . . shun, avoid someone." This, then, is the Lord's way of dealing with brethren who walk disorderly, or, with those who disturb the peace of and bring reproach upon the church. It is fair to conclude from 1 Cor. 5: 1, 2, 13 that a situation may develop, which demands that the offender be expelled from the fellowship of the church. The original word for "put away" in verse 13 is *exairō*, and it means, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to "drive out

the evil man from among you." (Cf. 1 Cor. 5: 2; cf Deut. 24: 7.)

It is interesting to note that wherever Paul preached, he could always call upon the brethren to imitate his way of life. This would include his manner of handling the word of the Lord; his dealing with people, both in the church and out of it; his practice of preaching the gospel, without monetary remuneration; and, as in the case now in hand, his engaging in physical labor, in order to support himself and others. In the closing part of his address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 17-35), he said, "I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 1-23.)

### The Vice of Idleness

(2 Thess. 3: 10-15)

*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 among you 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. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

Attention has been repeatedly called to the fact that the apostle Paul did a great deal of preaching on the second coming of Christ, during his stay in Thessalonica; and it is easy to see, as noted before, that some of the brethren misunderstood that which he said, and some even went so far as to misrepresent his teaching on the subject. And it is not out of place just here to make this timely observation, namely, There is only a very short step between misunderstanding and misrepresentation. (Cf. John 2: 18-22;

Mark 15: 29, 30.) It appears quite probable that some of the newly made disciples felt that Jesus would reappear most any day, and there was therefore no further need for work on their part; they could easily live on the benevolence of the wealthier brethren, or on the generosity of the church as a whole. Paul, however, reminded the brethren that he had commanded them, while he was yet with them, that if any will not work, neither let him eat, that is, do not permit him to live on the funds provided by other Christians.

This is a lesson which is sorely needed today, both on the part of the church itself, and those who look to the church for support, while making no effort to supply their own needs. The Speaker's Bible points out that charity loses all of its beneficence, when it merely ministers to selfish idleness. The wilfully idle person must be held to forfeit all claim to the assistance of his brethren. There are all too many church leaders today who are unwilling to investigate properly, before going to the aid of those who ask for help. It is easier, as they view the matter, to supply the wants of those making the request, than it is to find out whether or not they are really deserving. Such church leaders should remember that it was the inspired apostle Paul who said, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat." And in this letter, in this section of the lesson text, he repeated his command, together with an exhortation. (Read verses 12, 13.)

The apostle then went on to say, "And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And ye count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." This is further proof that the disorderly of this lesson were not excommunicated, that is, cast out of the church, as that expression is commonly understood. Instead of doing that, they were to try to make the erring brother ashamed of his attitude and conduct, and try to bring

him to repentance. (Cf. Gal. 6: 1; James 5: 19, 20.)

Any thoughtful observer, however, knows that it is exceedingly difficult for sincere brethren and devoted church leaders to discipline the disorderly; for it often happens that other congregations will receive into their fellowship, with open arms, those who have been avoided in keeping with Paul's instruction here. This is true within the congregation itself—one group or various individuals taking the part of the person whom the elders are trying to correct. However, it is fair to say that all should be certain that they are themselves following the Lord's teaching in such matters, before they undertake to refuse fellowship with any member of the church. (Cf. Matt. 18: 15-17.) It is interesting to observe that the original for "note," in verse 14, means "to take special notice of," and that the term occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The Greek expression for "have no company with," means not to associate with. (Cf. 1 Cor. 5: 9, 11, where the same instruction is given.)

### Prayer, Autographic Attestation, and Benediction

(2 Thess. 3: 16-18)

*Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.*

Real peace can come only from the Lord of peace; and he will bestow such peace only when his people trust and obey him. (Cf. Isa. 26: 3; Phil. 4: 6, 7.) The Lord has also promised to be with his people throughout the present age. (See Matt. 28: 20.)

*The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.*

It was pointed out earlier in these studies that a spurious or, a counterfeit letter may have been sent to the Thessalonians in Paul's name. If this is true, his practice of autographing his epistles may have stemmed from that incident. Paul apparently had an amanuensis, a letter-writer, or one who took dictation, to write his letters (cf. Rom.

16: 22—see also 1 Cor. 16: 2; Gal. 6: 11; Col. 4: 18; but he usually wrote the closing salutation with his own hand. The last words of the two Thessalonian letters are identical, with the exception of the word

“all” in Second Thessalonians. Hendriksen asks, “Was this word added, so that those who were rebuked could be sure that there was room for them in the great heart of the apostle Paul?”

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Why is the question of dealing with the disorderly an important one?

To what greater subject does this question belong and why?

What all does “discipline” include?

What are not all people who are disciplined of the Lord saved?

### The Golden Text

What is the basic meaning of prayer?

What are some of the forms which prayer takes?

What place does intercessory prayer have in the lives of God’s people?

### The Lord’s Doctrine of Separation

What over-all relationship do Christians sustain to the Lord and why?

What command did Paul give the Thessalonians?

What disorderly walk did he apparently have in mind?

What does the term “withdraw” involve?

Give reason for your answer.

What was one of the principal reasons for the rapid growth of the early church?

What could we expect from the same practice today? Give reasons for your answer.

What is the Lord’s plan for dealing with all kinds of disorderly conduct?

When should people be excluded from the fellowship of the church?

In what way did Paul emphasize the matter of personal example?

### The Vice of Idleness

Why, apparently, did some of the Thessalonian Christians become idle and busybodies?

What can you say of the importance of this lesson for our day?

Why, seemingly, are so many churches and individuals lax with reference to idlers?

What command and exhortation did Paul give in this letter regarding this subject?

What did he tell the brethren when he was there about those who would not work?

Why is not that injunction enforced today?

How did Paul direct the brethren to deal with those who refused his admonition?

Why is it so difficult to discipline disorderly people today in many places?

### Prayer, Autographic Attestation, and Benediction

What was Paul’s closing prayer for the Thessalonian brethren?

How alone may the Lord’s people have peace?

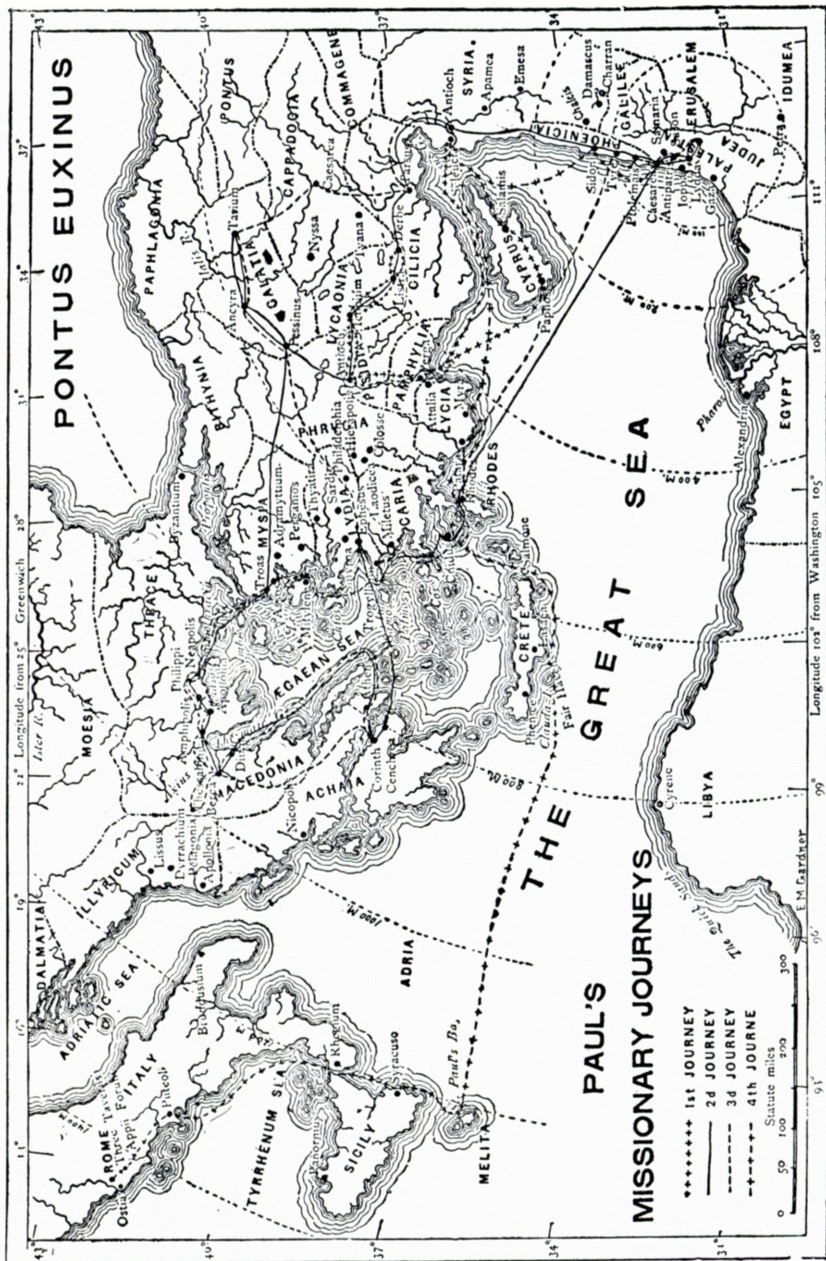
What promise has he made for this age?

What may have been the reason for Paul’s personally autographing his epistles?

How did he apparently get his letters written? Give reasons for your answer.

What was the apostle’s benediction and in what way did it differ from that of the first letter?





## THIRD QUARTER

### THE DUTIES OF ELDERS, DEACONS AND PREACHERS (FIRST AND SECOND TIMOTHY AND TITUS)

*AIM.—To study thoroughly Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus, and to note especially instruction therein touching the duties and responsibilities of elders, deacons and evangelists in their respective spheres.*

Lesson I—July 5, 1970

### PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

#### Lesson Text

1 Tim. 1: 1-11, 18-20

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Je'-sus our hope;

2 Unto Tim'-o-thy, my true child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Je'-sus our Lord.

3 As I exhorted thee to tarry, at Eph'-e-sus, when I was going into Mac-e-do'-ni-a, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine,

4 Neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do *I now*.

5 But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned:

6 From which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking;

7 Desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.

8 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,

9 As knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.

10 For fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine;

11 According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

18 This charge I commit unto thee, my child Tim'-o-thy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare;

19 Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith:

20 Of whom is Hy-me-nae'-us and Al-ex-an'-der; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme.

GOLDEN Text.—*"Timothy, my true child in faith."* (1 Tim. 1: 2.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 1: 12-17.

#### Daily Bible Readings

June 29.	M.....	Timothy's Background (2 Tim. 1: 5-14)
June 30.	T.....	Timothy's Training (2 Tim. 3: 14-17)
July 1.	W.....	Timothy's Enlistment (Acts 16: 1-3)
July 2.	T.....	Timothy's Faithfulness (Phil. 2: 19-23)
July 3.	F.....	Timothy, a Good Minister (1 Tim. 4: 6-16)
July 4.	S.....	Timothy's Charge (1 Tim. 6: 13-21)
July 5.	S.....	Timothy's Responsibility (2 Tim. 2: 14-26)

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

The three epistles which we are to study during the next three months, are so closely related that they must stand or fall together. It is true that each one of them has its own peculiarities; but it is also true that they have so much in common, as to make it necessary that they be grouped together. The following statement from Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, in loco*, seems to be a fair appraisal of their nature and relationship to Paul's other epistles. "The epistles possess common elements of language, similar features of doctrine, discipline, organization, and an atmosphere laden with kindred varieties of error, which constitute them a group distinct from the other epistles of Paul, in fact so distinct that many scholars of varied schools have found difficulty in accepting them as authentic."

The question regarding their authenticity, has long been in dispute. There are respected scholars who categorically deny that Paul wrote them; but there are many others, and equally respected, who are just as confident that the apostle Paul did write them. Newport J. D. White, in his introduction to *The Pastoral Epistles in The Expositor's Greek Testament*, finds "it easier to believe that St. Paul was the author of them, as they have come down to us, than that a Paulinist (assuming that there was ever a special school of Pauline thought), sometime between 90 and 120 A.D., worked up a few fragments of genuine letters of his master into Second Timothy and Titus, and then composed First Timothy in imitation of his own style. This second alternative represents,

broadly speaking, the theory of the anti-traditional school of critics."

It is also true that there is a wide range of difference in vocabulary, between Paul's other epistles, and the ones now before us. The epistles to Timothy and Titus contain one hundred and seventy-five words, which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, plus one hundred and thirty-one words found elsewhere, but not in Paul's writings. There are four hundred and seventy words in Paul's other epistles (Hebrews is not counted in these figures), which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

Robertson observes that "after all vocabulary is not wholly a personal problem. It varies with age in the same person and with the same subject matter also. Precisely such differences exist in the writings of Shakespeare and Milton as critics have long ago observed. The only problem that remains is whether the differences are so great in the pastoral epistles as to prohibit the Pauline authorship when 'Paul the aged' writes on the problem of pastoral leadership to two young ministers trained by him who have to meet the same incipient Gnostic heresy already faced in Colossians and Ephesians. My judgment is that, all things considered, the contents and style of the pastoral epistles are genuinely Pauline, mellowed by age and wisdom and perhaps written in his own hand or at least by the same amanuensis in all three instances. Lock suggests Luke as the amanuensis for the pastorals." (Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. IV, p. 557.)

## The Golden Text

This portion of our study for today is a part of the principal text; and it will be considered in its proper place.

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation and Paul's Purpose in Writing to Timothy

(1 Tim. 1: 1-7)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope; unto Timothy, my true child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace,*

*from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Greek letters, or epistles, as they were often called, usually began with the name of the writer, followed by the name of the person for whom the message was intended, and to whom greetings were sent.

Paul did not begin all of his letters by referring to the fact that he was an apostle; but in cases where his apostolic authority had been challenged, or where it needed to be asserted for the benefit of those who might want to challenge it, he made use of the term. Notable exceptions to this rule are to be seen in the letters to the Thessalonians, to Philemon, and to the Philippians. These four epistles were written to beloved friends and brethren in Christ; and there was no occasion for calling the fact of his apostleship to their attention.

But in the case now before us, that is, in his first letter to Timothy, Paul was assigning to his son in the gospel a task to perform, which required that he speak with authority. And so, in case his right to speak in that manner should be called in question, Timothy could very easily read his commission from a letter which had been addressed to him by an apostle, who had been made such by both God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful gospel preachers today are often called on to deal with situations, which involve speaking with authority; and if they will make sure that they are speaking that which has been made a part of God's revealed and inspired word, the result will likely be more satisfactory. It sometimes happens, however, that those in authority practically forbid certain vital issues to be discussed by the preacher; but, making allowance for practical wisdom and sound judgment, the preacher will be better off to permit himself to be relieved of his duties, and dismissed from the work altogether; than to be unfaithful to the trust which the Lord has imposed in him. (Cf. Acts 4: 18-20; 5: 29; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

The original term for "Saviour" occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament, and of that number eight references are to God, six of them in Timothy and Titus. God is our Saviour in the sense of the original source (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18, 19); while Jesus is the agent through whom the process is accomplished (1 John 4: 14). Christ is our hope, both in this life and in that which is to come. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 19.) Timothy, apparently, was converted by Paul at Lystra, during the first

great missionary journey which he, along with Barnabas, made. The first mention of Timothy's name in the New Testament, is in Acts 16: 1, where he was selected to assist Paul and Silas in that which was Paul's second great missionary journey. The form of the salutation in 1 Timothy has no parallel in the New Testament, other than in 2 Timothy. The term "mercy" is included in no other salutation written by Paul, except the two just mentioned.

*The Greater Men and Women of the Bible* notes that among the friends of Paul, there is no one who appeals more to our interest and sympathies, than Timothy. For not only was he associated with the apostle during a longer period than any of his other companions; but he was evidently regarded with an altogether peculiar affection and esteem. Timothy, following the example of the apostle John, might have referred to himself as "the disciple whom Paul loved"; for the great apostle to the Gentiles never paid a greater tribute to any of his fellow-workers, than the one he penned regarding Timothy, namely, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 2: 19-22.)

It is easy to see from the quotation just given, that Timothy shared his spiritual father's outward labors and intimate thoughts. Timothy was sent on some of the most delicate and confidential missions, and was given places of great responsibility, with some of the most important congregations. When Paul was in his last, and perhaps his most lonely, imprisonment, it was Timothy whom he summoned from far-away Ephesus to Rome, to console him and receive his final instructions. Everything therefore which we can learn about Timothy, is significant for the light which it throws upon the character alike of the pupil and the master.

*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. But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: from which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm.*

While standard versions of the Scriptures are generally preferable to modern version, which are usually the work of single individual; it often happens that a comparison of these lesser used translations will help one to see, perhaps in a clearer manner, the rendering of the older versions, such as the King James or the American Standard, when they are compared with the newer translations. Moffatt, for example, expresses Paul's charge to Timothy in these words: "Stay where you are at Ephesus and warn certain individuals against teaching novelties and studying myths and interminable genealogies; such studies bear upon speculations rather than on the divine order which belongs to faith."

There are times when gospel preachers should move on to other fields; and there are times when they should stay where they are. But it is not difficult for any careful observer to recognize the fact that in many instances the Lord's people have developed such disrespect for the God-ordained place and work of gospel preachers, as to make it next to impossible for a faithful proclaimer of the truth to deal with a situation, similar to that which Paul pictures here. And too, some preachers, all through the years, have manifested arrogance, to the extent that their usefulness has all but been completely destroyed.

If all the people in the church would stop to consider that Christ is the head of the church, and all of that which is done, if the Lord is pleased, must be done "in the Lord," there would be a different story to tell. Gospel preachers have never been authorized to entertain the

people, but to preach the word of the Lord on all pertinent questions (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5); and it is the duty of all others, preachers and church leaders included, to give earnest heed to that which the Lord commands. There is no room in the Lord's program for anything which owes its origin to men; and it is the business of those who are charged with teaching the truth, to see to it that false teachers are not permitted to lead others into error.

The real purpose in gospel preaching is not to antagonize people who are in error, and drive them out of the church; but rather to enable them to see the error of their way, and escape from the clutches of the evil one. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.) God does not want any one to be lost (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); but he cannot, and will not, save those who continue in those things which are contrary to sound doctrine. It is the business therefore of faithful gospel preachers, and all other dedicated leaders in the church, to oppose false teachers, whether in the church or out of it; but they must make sure that their motives are pure, and that they themselves are doing as God would have them do. Preachers, and other church leaders, can sometimes manifest such an attitude, as to make themselves just as unacceptable to the Lord, as the people are whom they are opposing. But when preachers have a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith which is genuine, they will possess a love which seeks to fulfil the law of God. (Cf. Rom. 13: 10.)

The original word for "swerved" is found only here, in 1 Tim. 6: 21, and 2 Tim. 2: 18. Although rendered "erred" in the last two instances, the original term, that is, its root, is the same; and in all three passages the marginal reading is "*missed the mark.*" The false teachers referred to in the section of the lesson text now before us, had missed the mark with reference to a pure heart, a good conscience, and genuine faith, with result in love, or from which love flows; and since they did not arrive at the goal which God set for them, the obvious result was a deviation to a doctrine and practice which were foreign to God's will. (Cf. Tit. 3: 9; 1 Tim. 6:

20.) And although such false teachers desired to be instructors of the law, they did not understand that about which they were talking. As Phillips has it, "They want a reputation as teachers of the law, yet they fail to realize the meaning of their own words, still less of the subject they are so dogmatic about." Many thoughtful people today have seen this situation re-enacted many times.

### The True Purpose of the Law and Its Relation to the Gospel

(1 Tim. 1: 8-11)

*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

After showing that the would-be teachers of the law had missed the mark, which God has set for such servants, Paul went on to explain to Timothy what the true servant's attitude toward the law should be. The apostle says that the law is good, if properly used. The original word for the adverb "lawfully" is found in the New Testament, only here and in 2 Tim. 2: 5, where the obvious meaning is that if one expects to win the award in an athletic contest, he will have to play according to the rules of the game. But that, apparently, is not the idea which Paul means to convey in the passage now under consideration. To use the law *lawfully*, in the sense of the present discussion, one will have to use it according to its design; or, which is the same thing, he will have to use it in accordance to the spirit in which it was enacted. *The Twentieth Century New Testament* renders verse 8 in these words: "We know, of course, that the law is excellent, when used legitimately."

The true purpose of the law is

found in such passages as the following: "What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made." (Gal. 3: 19.) "So that the law has become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3: 24.) "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. Did then that which is good become death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good;—that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful." (Rom. 7: 12, 13.) The law therefore was intended to awaken a sense of sin in wrongdoers, to cause them to become conscious of sin; and was not designed for righteous people. So then, in the view of Paul, the law is not binding on, nor relevant, to followers of Christ; and those, accordingly, who sought to be "Christian teachers" of the law, in the inspired apostle's day, did not even understand the relationship which the law has to God's people in Christ. The same principle, in the case of some teachers, is still true.

The "sound doctrine," mentioned by Paul, is *healthful* (see marginal note), or which is the same thing, wholesome, teaching; and, as *The Expository Greek Testament* observes, it "admirably describes Christian teaching, as St. Paul conceived it, in its complete freedom from casuistry or quibbles in its theory, and from arbitrary or unnatural restrictions in its practice." Unsound teaching in Paul's day, as it still is in our day, claimed to be gospel teaching (cf. Gal. 1: 6, 7); and it was for that reason that the apostle found it necessary to "re-charge the word with its old force by distinguishing epithets. *Euangelion* [gospel] had become impoverished by heterodox associations. The gospel with which Paul had been entrusted was the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." (Op. cit.; cf. 2 Cor. 4: 4.)

The law and the gospel, so far as moral behavior is concerned, were based on the same principles, that is, the law forbade that which the gospel forbids; but inasmuch as the law has served its purpose, so far as

its regulatory designed was concerned (cf. Gal. 3: 25; Rom. 10: 4), it has been taken out of the way (Col. 2: 14), and the clearer and all-sufficient revelation of the gospel has been made. Therefore, those who desire to explain the law, that is, use it lawfully, will find the best explanation in the gospel, which Paul said had been committed to him. "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3: 21-23; cf. 1 Thess. 2: 1-4)

### Paul's Charge to Timothy Reiterated and Reinforced

(1 Tim. 1: 18-20)

*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; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme.*

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

#### Introduction

How are the three epistles we are to study this quarter related?

What can be said regarding their authenticity? Give reasons for your answer.

#### The Salutation and Paul's Purpose in Writing to Timothy

What was the usual style of Greek letters in Paul's day, and how did that style differ from that of our day?

Why did Paul sometimes assert his apostleship, and sometimes say nothing about it?

Why would the mention of his apostleship be of benefit of his son in the gospel, Timothy?

What lesson is there in Timothy's situation in Ephesus which applies to gospel preachers today?

What sometimes hinders faithful preachers from dealing with sinful situations today?

What are some of the principal reasons why a preacher should, or should not, move on?

What lessons do we learn from the use of

Timothy had a great warfare before him, and Paul wanted him to be prepared, in mind, body, and spirit, as he engaged in it. This required faith and a good conscience.

Some of the false teachers, apparently in Ephesus (cf. Acts 20: 28-30; 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4), not only did not have faith and a good conscience; they had actually thrust such from them, and made shipwreck concerning the faith. When people are determined to have their own way, and teach that which they think, they are certain to turn their backs upon the Lord. Two of the men involved in the situation just mentioned are singled out (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 17); and Paul said that he had turned them over to Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme. While we have no direct information on the subject, it is altogether possible that turning them over to Satan meant more than expelling them from membership in the church; or, which is the same thing, making it impossible for them to have fellowship with the Lord's people. These false teachers, and blasphemers of God's holy name, may have suffered some type of bodily punishment (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 7); but whatever happened to them was apparently intended for their own good. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28.)

the term "Saviour" in the New Testament?

In what sense is God our Saviour; and in what sense is Christ our Saviour?

When, apparently, was Timothy converted and under what circumstances do we first learn of him?

What peculiarity is noted in Paul's salutation in his two letters to Timothy?

Discuss Timothy's relationship to Paul.

What was the occasion for Paul's first letter to Timothy?

Why did the apostle want him to remain in Ephesus?

What is the chief work of a gospel preacher and how should he regard his mission?

What is the principal aim which faithful preachers should always have before them?

What specific qualifications should they possess?

What does it mean for a preacher, or any one else as for that matter, to miss the mark?

What basic lesson did the false teachers fail to learn?

#### The True Purpose of the Law and Its Relation to the Gospel

What does it mean for one to use the law lawfully?



How may we learn the real purpose of the law? Give reasons for your answer.  
 What does Paul mean by "sound doctrine"?  
 In what sense had the gospel been committed to Paul?  
 In what way are the law and the gospel related?  
 Why was the law removed as an authoritative code of conduct?

In what way has God's righteousness been manifested for our day?

Paul's Charge to Timothy Reiterated and Reinforced

Why did Paul re-emphasize his charge to his son in the gospel?

In what way did certain false teachers treat "faith and a good conscience"?

What did Paul do to them and why?

## Lesson II—July 12, 1970

### DUTIES ENJOINED

#### Lesson Text

1 Tim. 2: 1-10

1 I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men;

2 For kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity.

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

4 Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, *himself* man, Christ Je'-sus,

6 Who gave himself a ransom for

all; the testimony *to be borne* in its own times;

7 Whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), a teacher of the Gen'-tiles in faith and truth.

8 I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing.

9 In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Phil. 4: 6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 2: 11-15.

#### Daily Bible Readings

July 6. M.....	Whole Duty of Man (Eccles. 12: 1-14)
July 7. T.....	Duty to Preach the Word (2 Tim. 4: 1-6)
July 8. W.....	Duty to Contend for the Faith (Jude 3-7)
July 9. T.....	Duties of an Evangelist (Tit. 2: 1-10)
July 10. F.....	Duties of Elders (Tit. 1: 5-14)
July 11. S.....	Duties of Deacons (Acts 6: 1-15)
July 12. S.....	Duties of All (2 Thess. 3: 1-13)

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

#### Introduction

The term "duty," or its equivalent, occurs many times in the Bible; and it suggests a vital subject which should have the undivided attention of all people who have any hope or expectation of reaching heaven. The fundamental meaning of the expression, or, which is the same thing, the idea which the word

is meant to convey, is that of *obligation* or that which one *must* do. The term "must" has been described as being the strongest word in the English language; and it is certainly one of the most compelling. The word implies an obligation which cannot be evaded; or, to express the same thing in another way, it de-



notes an obligation from which no one can get away or avoid. We are, of course, speaking of one's duty or obligation to God.

One of the common practices among professed Christians of our day, or so it seems, is to see how little one can do, and still be regarded as being acceptable to the Lord. Such people are not satisfied without doing something; but they obviously do not want to do any more than what they themselves consider to be their duty. The question immediately arises, But what do such people regard as being their duty? and who is it that sets the standard of their obligation? The average person is likely to find the answers to these questions in the standard of public opinion by which he is surrounded. Duty too often means the average expectation in any given situation in life. But if one will read that which is in the inspired record, it will not be difficult for him to see that Christianity is *more* than doing that which one is obligated to do. For example, Jesus says, "But who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and after-

ward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank the servant because he did these things that were commanded? Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." (Luke 17: 7-10.)

The passage just quoted should help us to see the error involved in the common attitude toward duty, described in the preceding paragraph of these introductory remarks; and if we will carefully note that which Jesus says, it will be easy for us to see at least two errors in the thinking listed above, namely,

(1) It limits and narrows life in the service of the Lord; and (2) it breeds self-satisfaction, that is, it makes people satisfied with doing less than they are capable of doing. This attitude is diametrically opposed to both the spirit and letter of the New Testament. (James 2: 10; 4: 17; Matt. 25: 14-30; 2 Pet. 1: 5-11.) Not only must people do that which the Lord commands; they must *love* to do so. (See John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3; 2; Thess. 2: 8-12.) That which has been said in the introductory portion of this lesson is intended to show the over-all significance of the term "duty"; and that, of course, should be our attitude toward and concern with the duties of this lesson.

### The Golden Text

*"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* The immediate context of the passage just quoted is, "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." The words just quoted were written by the apostle Paul, while he was a prisoner in Rome. The time of his trial was approaching, and he, of course, did not know what the outcome of it might be. But he was not worrying about that. On the contrary, he cheerfully bade his beloved brethren in Philippi to be anxious in nothing. (Read Phil. 1: 21-24.)

The primary cause for 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, both with reference to that which God has promised, and has not promised, to do. God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent; and that should be enough to convince us, that we should have no hesitation in placing ourselves with his jurisdiction. And when we add to that which has just been said, the additional truth that God is good, and only good: we should make every effort to place our trust in him, and in him alone; for we can know that

he will not do anything for us, but that which is best. And so, in the words of John Greenleaf Whittier, in the closing part of *The Eternal Goodness*,

I know not what the future hath  
Of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies.

I know not where his islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;

I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,  
If hopes like these betray,  
Pray for me that my feet may gain  
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are  
seen  
Thy creatures as they be,  
Forgive me if too close I lean  
My human heart on Thee!

## The Text Explained

### The Duty and Privilege of Public Prayer

(1 Tim. 2: 1-4)

*I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved; and come to the knowledge of the truth.*

The chapter from which the lesson text for today's study is taken, is devoted to the public worship of the church. Paul takes it for granted that every church, that is, every congregation, will be a worshipping assembly. The apostle had left Timothy in Ephesus for the purpose of charging certain men not to run counter to the Lord's will, and to urge all to conduct themselves in a manner befitting the truth. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1; 3, 4, 18-20; 3; 14. 15.) And so, in the beginning of chapter 2, as the epistle is divided, the apostle begins to list the specific things which he wants his son in the gospel to carry out. The first has to do with prayer; and while the reference is to the public prayers of the assembled congregation, the principle which underlies them is also applicable to private prayers. If every member of the church would only stop and take into consideration that which the church does when it meets for worship, no one would want to miss a single assembly, if it is possible for him to be there.

There is no indication that Paul wants the Lord's people to draw nice distinctions between the four

phases of addressing God, which are mentioned in the text now before us, it is also true that they are not exact synonyms. *Supplication* means to ask for something, to satisfy a recognized and keenly felt need. *Prayer* is the heart's devotion, addressed only to God. We may supplicate men; but we can pray only to God, that is, in the sense that the term is used here. *Intercession* represents our childlike confidence in God, as we talk with him regarding the objects of our prayers. The original term for "intercession" occurs in the New Testament only here and in 1 Tim. 4: 5. There is another Greek term for "intercession" in such passages as Rom. 8: 27, 34; Heb. 7: 25. *Thanksgiving* is an expression of our gratitude, not only for the blessings we have received, but also for the privilege of approaching God in prayer. Paul's purpose in using all four of the terms, with reference to this phase of worship, is probably to illustrate the universal scope of prayer; or, to cover the various avenues of our approach to the heavenly Father.

The prayers of God's people must "be made for all men," including kings and those in high places. No genuine Christian can pray earnestly for some one else, and at the same time manifest a wrong attitude toward him. It is the duty of the child of God to love, in the highest sense of that term; and if there is to be any vengeance wrought, it must be left to God. (Cf. Rom. 12: 17-21.) If we take into consideration the fact that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, during the reign of one of the most wicked emperors in Roman history, that is, in the time

of Nero; it will be easy for us to see that it is God's will for his people to pray for the bad rulers, as well as for the better ones.

Practically the same kind of instruction was given to the captives in Babylon, as may be seen by reading Jer. 29: 1-7. The last verse of the passage just cited says, "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." The reason which Paul assigns for praying for rulers, is "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." The success of the Lord's reign is the object of the divine economy; and the closer Christians are permitted to live with Christ, the greater will be the success of the Lord's reign.

A "tranquil and quiet life" probably refers to inward and outward peace, as we endeavor to live before the Lord in all piety; while at the same time commanding the respect our fellow men. *Godliness* refers to our relation to God; while *gravity* has to do with our relation to our fellow men. Vincent notes that the latter term "signifies *reverend* or *venerable*; exhibiting a dignity which arises from moral elevation, and thus invites reverence," that is, respect. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 13-17.)

The course of action which Paul urges upon the Lord's people, that is, that which is contained in the first two verses of the chapter, is good and acceptable to God; because he wants all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9.) It is indeed only by the knowledge of the truth that any one can be saved. (Cf. John 6: 44, 45; 8: 31, 32; 1 Pet. 1:22-25.) If Christian people would keep this inspired teaching ever before them, and allow it to motivate their attitude and action toward others, there would be less criticism, and more praying, on their part.

A church which exemplifies the traits of character that Paul sets forth in this section of the lesson text, will do more toward drawing people to Christ, than all the resentful kind who refuse to respect those of the opposite way, and who decline to pray for and honor those rulers who are not according to their

liking. It is a fact, clearly set forth in the Scriptures, that God sometimes uses wicked and base rulers to accomplish his purpose. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Isa. 10: 5-11; Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Pet. 2: 13-17.) No human being knows the mind of God, except as he can learn it from his revealed will; and with that in mind, we should make every effort to abide in the truth which concerns us.

### The Reason Why Christians Should Pray for All Men

(1 Tim. 2: 5-7)

*For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times; whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I lie not), and teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

If Jehovah were only one among many gods, then it would be neither possible nor practical for his people to pray for all men; because there would be too many conflicting interests. But, as it is, there is only one true God; and it is his will that all men be saved. (Cf. Rom. 3: 29, 30.) The truth just stated is further emphasized by the fact that there is only one mediator between God and men. God is one, "and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring."  
(Acts 17: 26-28.)

And, in order to make it possible for sinful mankind to understand how to get back to God, a mediator, who is both God and man, was appointed for that purpose. A mediator, if he is to be effective in his work, must understand, and be in sympathy with, both of the estranged parties; and he must be recognized and accepted by both as having their interest at heart. (Cf.

2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) Not only did God send his Son to be the Savior of men

(John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 6-8), but Jesus himself was willing to take the form of a man, and give himself for the sins of the world (cf. John 10; 17, 18; Phil. 2: 5-8). And then, in addition to making the divine arrangements, Paul says that the testimony regarding them, that is, all that is involved in the gospel message, was to be proclaimed in due time (cf. Gal. 4: 4); and that he himself was appointed as a preacher (an inspired messenger) and an apostle (a witness who is sent forth) for that purpose. The parenthetical statement in verse 7 was probably added because of the well known opposition to him on the part of false teachers, such as Judaizers and heretics, who categorically denied his apostleship. It is quite probable that there were men in the church in Ephesus, who were among Paul's critics. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4, 20; 2 Tim. 1: 15.)

It is well to keep in mind the fact that the New Testament nowhere speaks of God's being reconciled to man, but always of man's being reconciled to God. (Cf. Isa. 59: 1, 2.) God is himself the Reconciler, as Paul declares, and he accomplishes that work through Christ. Donald M. Baillie has pointed out that there is in the New Testament a remarkable identification of the love of Christ, which led him to the cross; and the love of God which sent him there. And inasmuch as Christ came to his mission here upon the earth as the God-man, there can be no distinction between his love and that of God. In setting forth the truth of the love of Christ, which was demonstrated on the cross, the inspired writers of the New Testament were never able to stop short of tracing it up-stream to the eternal love of God, dealing sacrificially with the sins of the world.

Paul F. Barackman, in speaking of the exclusiveness of the gospel, says, There is one God and one Mediator. Truth is always exclusive. God's mercy takes in all men, but there is only one Mediator of it, one way by which it may be obtained. The entrance to life, said our Lord, is by a 'strait gate,' and added, not because he was glad for it but because it is true, that only a few find this gate. There are not two multiplication tables, otherwise there

could be no mathematics. There are not alternate sets of physical laws. So there are not two gospels. Naaman did not want to wash in the Jordan, but that was the place to be made clean. Men do not want to accept the work of a Saviour, but he is God's appointed way for the sinner to come to him. Yet remember that although the gate is narrow, it is always open." (Comments on 1 Tim. 2: 1-7)

### Rules for Men and Women in Public Worship

(1 Tim. 2: 8-10)

*I desire therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works.*

The apostle Paul makes it plain that the men, rather than the women, are to be the ministers of prayer in the public assembly; and when he urges that men pray in every place, he obviously means in every place where the church is. But when men take the lead in praying for all men, there are certain traits which must characterize them; as, for example, their hands must be "holy" (*hosios*) that is, hands which are morally and spiritually clean. It apparently was the custom of those who led in praying, whether kneeling or standing (cf. Mark 11: 25; Luke 18: 9-14) to raise their hands; and Paul wanted to emphasize the fact that such hands must be *clean* in God's sight. "Without wrath and disputing" is literally without anger or indignation towards those for whom the prayer is being offered; and doubting toward God. (See marginal note; cf. James 1: 5-8.)

Women, on the other hand, have a definite place in the worshipping assembly; but they also have specific instruction, which is applicable to them alone. Their relation to men is that of subordination, but without the dishonor which some endeavor to associate with the term. This relationship between the man and the woman had its origin, in the econ-

omy of God, both in creation and the fall (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 11-14; Gen. 3: 16); and the inspired record is available to all who want to read it. The Lord's application of the principle of woman's subordination to man, in the worshipping assembly, is set forth, in addition to 1 Tim. 2: 11-14, in such passages as 1 Cor. 11: 2-16; 14: 33-35. "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant." (1 Cor. 14: 37, 38; 1 John 4: 6; Rev. 22: 10, 11.)

It should be observed, however, that woman's subordinate relationship in no way affects her salvation; for she, as much as the man, is the object of God's great love, and the sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of all mankind. But both the man and the woman must attain the supreme state of blessedness, by working out of the penalty which was imposed upon the first human pair, following their transgression in the garden of Eden. The human race is compelled to suffer the consequences of that which Adam and Eve did; and that makes the duties and relationships, which Paul discusses in the chapter from which the lesson text for today is taken, obligatory upon all of God's people, both men and women. We should remember, though, that we are not held responsible for the actual sins of Adam and Eve; for Paul makes it plain in Rom. 5: 12-21, that what we lost in Adam we gain in Christ. However, if we refuse to follow the Lord's instructions to us, then we will have to answer for our own transgressions.

Paul's word regarding the appearance of women in the public assembly (the same principle, of course, applies anywhere), is not difficult to understand. They are to make themselves conspicuous, not by personal display of their charms; but by good works. Godly women are to adorn themselves with becoming apparel, and be characterized by shamefastness and sobriety. Vincent says that the force of the original word from which we have "shamefastness" is that of being bound or made fast by an honorable shame. (Cf. *stedfastness*.) According to Thayer, it is a sense of shame which precedes and prevents shameful actions. Trench thinks of the term as that pudency, which shrinks from passing over the limits of womanly reserve and modesty. The practical meaning of "sobriety" is sobermindedness, or, as Trench expresses it, that habitual inner self-government, with its constant reign on all the passions and desires, which would hinder temptation from arising, or, at all events, from arising with such strength, as would overrun the checks and barriers, which shamefastness placed before it.

Christian women, as Paul plainly states, should not allow outward and costly adornments to overshadow and detract from the godly traits of character, which are of great price in the Lord's sight. (Cf. 1 Pet. 3: 1-4.) Godly women should not seek to imitate the women of the world in this respect. The original word for "becometh" means, according to Thayer, to stand out, to be conspicuous, to be eminent. Good works, and not the outward adorning of the body, should be the distinguishing marks of Christian women.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is the subject of duty so important to responsible people?  
What common practice is seen on the part of many professed Christians and why?  
What do the Scriptures teach with reference to this common error?

### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?  
Why do so many professed children of

God lack faith in him with reference to life?

What are some of the basic reasons for implicit faith in the Lord?

### The Duty and Privilege of Public Prayer

What are the nature and contents of the chapter from which this lesson is taken?  
What great benefits do we gain from such a study?  
In what ways did Paul speak of prayer, and for what probable reason?  
For whom are the Lord's people to pray and why?  
Who will benefit the most from the prayers which please the Lord?

What is the meaning of a "tranquil and quiet life"?

What does Paul say is good and acceptable in the Lord's sight?

What does he desire regarding all men and what should be our attitude toward that goal?

How can a church of the Lord best draw people to him?

#### The Reason Why Christians Should Pray for All Men

What is the basic reason for praying for people everywhere?

What profound effect should this truth have upon the Lord's people?

What is a "mediator" and why was such needed in the scheme of human redemption?

Why did Paul probably add a word of explanation regarding his preaching?

Why did so many professed followers of Christ register such opposition to Paul?

What does the question of "reconciliation" involve? Give reasons for your answer.

What does the Bible teach with reference to the exclusiveness of the gospel?

#### Rules for Men and Women in Public Worship

Why are men, rather than women, the divinely designated ministers of prayer?

What does it mean for men to lift up holy hands?

What is implied in the expression "without wrath and disputing"?

Why is it essential that Christians have the right attitude toward God and man when they pray?

What specific instruction does Paul give with reference to Christian women in the assembly?

Why aren't Christian women permitted to take the lead in public worship?

What is involved in woman's subordinate relationship to man and what effect on her salvation?

How does the Lord want Christian women to appear in the public assembly?

### Lesson III—July 19, 1970

## QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF ELDERS

### Lesson Text

1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Tit. 1: 5-9

1 Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 No brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having *his* children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (But if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the

snare of the devil.

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge;

6 If any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly.

7 For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre;

8 But given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled;

9 Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* (1 Tim. 3: 1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 14: 21-26.

### Daily Bible Readings

July	13.	M.....	Elders in Every Church (Acts 14: 22-28)
July	14.	T.....	Plurality of Elders-Bishops (Phil. 1: 1-11)
July	15.	W.....	Elders Are Overseers (Bishops) (Acts 20: 28, 29)
July	16.	T.....	Elders Are Pastors (Eph. 4: 10-15)
July	17.	F.....	Elders Are Presbyters (1 Tim. 4: 12-16)

July 18. S.....Respect and Obey Elders (Heb. 13: 7-17)

July 19. S.....Peter's Admonition to Elders (1 Pet. 5: 1-4)

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia and Ephesus, respectively; Timothy, in Ephesus; Titus, in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul, Timothy, and Titus.

### Introduction

The lesson for today is one which is vital to the welfare of the church; and it is hoped that what is said here will stir brethren everywhere to a greater study of the leadership of the church, generally speaking. If one will take an over-all view of the New Testament, it will not be difficult for him to see that one of the greatest, if not indeed the greatest, responsibility which any man can assume with reference to his fellows, is that of an elder in the Lord's church. Gospel preachers, to be sure, have a tremendous responsibility (cf. Ezek. 3: 16-21; Acts 20: 17-27); but preaching the word with urgency, in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, with all longsuffering and teaching (see 2 Tim. 4: 1-5), is about as far as any faithful gospel preacher can go: he cannot compel obedience (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

But the men who make up a scriptural eldership, have a responsibility which is above and beyond that of the gospel preacher. It is the duty of the elders to see to it that those who are under their care, either improve their lives, in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, or suffer the consequences of the discipline which the Lord has authorized. (Cf. 1 Thess. 5: 12-15; 2 Thess. 3: 6-15; 1 Cor. 5: 1-13.)

It appears that there are all too many men who accept an assignment in the eldership of a church largely for the honor, prestige, and authority, they hope it will bring to them, instead of being motivated by a sincere desire and determination to be genuine shepherds of the flock, over which they have been selected and appointed to serve. Such men are little more than business managers; they can issue orders and directives, while knowing little or nothing about the actual condition, physically, morally, and spiritually, of the various members of the

church over which they should watch. (Cf. Heb. 13: 17.)

When one takes into consideration all that the New Testament says regarding the eldership, and especially in the light of present-day thinking, it seems quite logical that the qualifications of elders should be considered, after a study of responsibilities; but that, of course, would require more space and time than is allotted to this lesson. If the course just suggested is followed, it will be much easier for people to grasp the significance of the type of men needed in the eldership, after they see something of that which God expects of them. Too often the qualifications of elders are considered more or less abstractly, or, considered apart from the over-all picture of the eldership; and when that is done, it is difficult to appreciate the reason for the high attributes of character which God requires of shepherds of the flock. People who want to study the qualifications first usually get bogged down in academic discussions, without ever seeing the subject of the eldership as a whole.

The very nature of the work which God expects of elders makes certain qualifications essential; and if one will only take the time to read and study that which the New Testament says about the duties of such men, he will not have to be told that they will have to maintain a very high moral standard, if they are to succeed in their endeavor to perform the duties incumbent upon them, and exercise the influence, both within and without the congregation, which is expected of them. After looking at the New Testament picture of the eldership as a whole, it is easy to see that there is an urgent need for qualifications, which are commensurate with the position which the men who make up that body of leaders occupy, and the work which they are obligated to

do; but we must remember that the Lord has not left it to us to name the traits of character which are essential. The required qualifications,

along with the specific duties which God expects of elders, are given in great detail in the New Testament; as we shall see in this study.

### The Golden Text

This portion of our study for today is a part of the principal text; and it will be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### The Eldership Is a Good Work

(1 Tim. 3: 1)

*"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."*

The expression "faithful is the saying" is found several times in the letters which Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus; and it literally means a statement which can be relied upon, or worthy, of credit, because of its origin—an inspired saying. It is easy to see, from the way in which Paul begins his instruction here, that the eldership is worthy of man's best efforts. Men are expected to seek the position, rather than that the position seek them. Paul's words are: "If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." There is no word for "office" in the original, as that expression is generally understood. The Greek term for "seeketh" is *oregō*, and it is found three times in the New Testament, namely, here, 1 Tim. 6: 10; Heb. 11: 16. The word in question is rendered "reaching after" in 1 Tim. 6: 10, which is the evident meaning of the term in the passage now before us.

With the observations just made in mind, the passage now under consideration literally reads, "If any man reaches after the overseership, he desireth a good work." The New English Bible renders the expression, "To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition," while Today's English Version has, "If a man is eager to be a church leader he desires an excellent work." This is enough to show that Paul was not referring to the eldership as an office, in the popular sense of that term. David Lipscomb has pointed out the fact that a man's becoming an elder, does not authorize him to perform any religious service, which he was not already authorized to do. His statement on the question continues: "It only makes it his busi-

ness especially to look after the work now. He is to be chosen because he has shown his fitness for the office by doing the work beforehand. This shows that it is not an office in the sense of an office of a civil government; but it is a duty imposed growing out of a fitness developed for the work needed to be done."

Any person therefore who longs to be an elder in the Lord's church has a worthy ambition; and he will, accordingly, make every effort within his power to gain his goal. It has never been the Lord's will that men be chosen to lead his people, who showed no particular interest in preparing themselves for that task. When men demonstrate that they are interested in doing the work of the Lord, which the eldership involves, by personal preparation and service, and who are endeavoring to see to it that they have the personal traits of character needed in that position, they are the ones who should be appointed to that sacred trust. Furthermore, Paul's words in the passage now under consideration indicate that it is the *work*, rather than the *position*, upon which the emphasis should be placed. It is a good work, because it is the work which was ordained by God.

#### The Instruction Given to Timothy

(1 Tim. 3: 2-7)

*The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how can he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the*



*condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

A running commentary will ordinarily enable one to get a fairly accurate idea of the meaning of the passage of scripture now under consideration; but that method is not entirely satisfactory here. This passage, in fact, is a good example of the truth that the Bible is meant to be *studied*, as well as to be *read*; and when that is done, it will be easy to see that the qualifications herein listed, do not fall into the same category. There are, indeed, three distinct categories into which the qualifications of elders fall; and if they are considered according to this viewpoint, it will be much easier to get a complete picture of the divine standard for elders. The three categories just referred to are

(1) negative qualifications; (2) positive qualifications; and (3) domestic relationships. This analysis should be kept in mind, as one studies the type of men elders are expected to be.

1. *Negative qualifications.* One of the very first things which a man who wants to be an elders in the Lord's church, and who is being considered for that work, should do, is to see that he does not possess, or tolerate in his life, those characteristics which are not pleasing to the Lord. Paul mentions these negative traits under the following heads:

(1) *Experience:* Not a novice, that is, not a new or inexperienced convert. (2) *Character:* No brawler, no striker, not contentious, no lover of money, not self-willed, not soon angry. Most of the terms used by Paul to indicate the type of men who should be in the eldership, are easily understood by the average student; but if any one needs additional information regarding a specific term, he should consult an English or a Bible dictionary, or both.

2. *Positive qualifications.* It is not enough for the leaders in the Lord's church to be free from the faults which have just been mentioned; they must possess those traits of character, which will enable them to be a force for good in the work which they are expected to perform. The positive characteris-

tics are, as given by Paul, listed under these heads: (1) *Character:* Blameless, or, without reproach, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, gentle, a lover of good, just, holy. (2) *Reputation:* Good testimony from them that are without. (3) *Intellectual ability:* Apt to teach.

J. W. McGarvey, in commenting on this last qualification, notes that "the elder, then, must be capable of teaching; but this expression represents a variable quantity. One might be capable of teaching some persons, and utterly incapable of teaching others. It becomes a matter of necessity, then, that before we can form a judgment as to a man's possession of this qualification in the requisite degree, we must know who it is that he is to teach. A person capable of teaching children might be incapable of teaching adults, as one capable of teaching in an academy might be incapable of teaching the classes in a college. So an elder might be capable of teaching a congregation in one community, and not in another nearby. What is the standard, then, by which each individual candidate for the eldership is to be judged in this respect? Undoubtedly, it is to be found in the attainments of the congregation which he is to teach. He is to be *their* teacher, and theirs alone; consequently, if he is capable of teaching them, he has the capability required by the Scriptures. From this it appears that properly qualified elders may possess capability of teaching in as great variety of degree as characterizes the intellectual and religious attainments of the various congregations. Furthermore, it must be evident that each individual congregation is the best judge of the capability of an elder to be its teacher. So long as they receive instruction from the elder, and are satisfied with him, he is qualified according to the Scriptures to teach that congregation, however much he may fall below some other elder in some other congregation.

3. *Domestic relationships.* Practically all of the qualifications for elders, which have already been listed, are relative in their application to the eldership. The standard itself is perfect, but the men who make up the eldership are imperfect. It

would be next to impossible to find a group of men, who measure up to these divine requirements, in every detail; but if the men who serve as elders in the Lord's church are to please God, and do their work effectively, they must have these qualifications to a degree which is high enough to be known and recognized as men of experience, influence, ability, integrity, and devotion to the cause in which, and for which, they serve.

It is a well known fact that members of the church are frequently critical of their elders, while they themselves are falling far short of their own duty as Christians. This, of course, is not right. (Cf. Matt. 7: 1-5.) It would be much more effective, and certainly nearer to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament, if every member of the body of Christ would first of all make an honest effort to see that he himself is meeting with the Lord's approval; and then do all he can to encourage the others, including the elders, to make sure that they, too, are striving toward the divine standard, which has been set up for them.

The question is often raised regarding the acceptableness of a situation where a marked deficiency in the qualifications of one or more of the elders is obvious. If the reference is to those qualifications which have already been listed in this lesson, that is, those qualifications which have to do with the moral and spiritual life of the elders, along with their ability to function as God expects them to, then immediate steps should be taken to improve those conditions; for there can be no reasonable doubt, in the mind of any informed and thoughtful person, regarding the meaning and necessity of the requirements already listed. But if the reference is to the domestic relationships, which are mentioned by Paul in the lesson text for today's study, then we are confronted with a situation which is not as clear-cut and definite, as in the case involving the other qualifications. There is room for some questions here.

The New Testament does not, as a rule, deal with exceptions, when

giving direction for practical living. Instead, it lays down principles which are intended to cover all the normal situations of life. For example, Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." (Eph. 6:

1.) The apostle no doubt used the plural because families generally have more than one child. The injunction just referred to, of course, applies to all children of Christian parents, whether taken as a whole, or the children in a given family, or to a single child in a family. In a similar manner, the men who are qualified for the eldership are generally married men, with children; and there is little, if any, doubt but that the Lord expects the elders to be selected from this class, if such are available, and are otherwise fitted for the position.

The domestic relationship qualifications which Paul names are (1) *the husband of one wife*. If these words are to be taken alone, that is, abstractly, there is no doubt about their teaching that either celibacy or polygamy disqualifies a man for the eldership; but inasmuch as celibacy, in and of itself, is not an evil, while polygamy is, it is possible that the requirement was intended to counteract the evils of polygamy. (2) *"Having children that believe"*—

(3) *"one that ruleth well his own house."* These expressions are not necessarily the same. Abraham ruled his own house, before he had any children of his own flesh and blood. But it is obvious that the man who is being considered for the eldership must be able to rule his own house, regardless of who may make up that household. Any man who cannot influence his own family, in this respect, would hardly be fitted to assume the leadership of others. Men with faithful families, that is, with faithful wives and children, should be given the preference when it comes to selecting elders, if they are otherwise qualified for the work.

David Lipscomb, in response to a statement that "our congregation has dispensed with the eldership in consequence of not having men who possess all the requirements," said, "Do you mean that your congregation has dispensed with the work

that elders should do? That nobody instructs the congregation or looks after the weak members? That you have no rule or discipline in the church? Do you mean that nobody leads in the worship? Nobody asks another to give thanks at the table or to lead in prayer? Nobody urges other members to meet to worship God, or to live honestly, uprightly, and deal justly and fairly in the world? If you have given up these things, you have given up being Christians.

"A people cannot live as Christians without doing all the work for one another in the community that God requires. They cannot do this without doing the work of elders and deacons in a community. You cannot live as Christians in a community without looking after the spiritual interests of the church and the public and without helping the poor and the needy, without teaching the ignorant and reproving the wrongdoers. When this is done, the work of elders is done, and it is much more important that the work of the elders than that the office of elders should be looked after."

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

Why is the lesson for today so important?  
What is the extent of the influence and authority of scriptural elders?  
What motive should always characterize the men who seek the eldership?  
What general guide-lines should be followed in studying the question of the eldership?  
Why is it sometimes better to consider what is expected of elders, before studying their qualifications?

#### The Eldership Is a Good Work

What does Paul mean by the expression "faithful is the saying"?  
What is the proper way for the "eldership" to be filled and replenished?  
What does it mean for one to seek the position of an elder?  
In what sense is the eldership considered to be an "office"?  
Where should the emphasis be placed when we consider the eldership?

#### The Instruction Given to Timothy

What important lesson for Bible study is brought into focus here?  
What is the real difference in studying the Bible and in merely reading it?  
What, then, is the better way to enter into this consideration?

### The Instruction Given to Titus

(Tit. 1: 5-9)

*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge; if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.*

The two lists of qualifications for elders, given to Timothy and Titus, contain the same number of characteristics, but the two lists are not identical. Furthermore, there is no reason for assuming that either man had to have the instruction sent to the other, before he could have the full truth. Each list shows the type of men the Lord wants for elders.

Into what three categories does Paul list the qualifications for elders?  
Which group of qualifications should be considered first and why?  
Under what headings does Paul list the negative qualifications?  
Why are positive qualifications essential?  
Under what headings does Paul list the positive qualifications?  
How can a man be certain that he is qualified to teach?  
What is meant by the domestic relationships of elders?  
Why are so many members of the church often critical of their elders?  
What serious defect in their own lives does such an attitude reveal?  
Why are the moral and spiritual requirements relative in their application to elders?  
What is the best way to deal with the domestic relationships?  
Why is it absolutely essential that the work of elders be carried on by a congregation?  
What problem does this sometimes place before a church?  
When is a church justified in not having elders? Give reasons for your answer.  
When are men best fitted for the eldership?

#### The Instruction Given to Titus

How are the lists of qualifications for elders, given to Timothy and Titus, related to each other?  
Did each man need the list given to the other? Why?

## Lesson IV--July 26, 1970

## QUALIFICATIONS AND DUTIES OF DEACONS

## Lesson Text

1 Tim. 3: 8-13

8 Deacons in like manner *must be* grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

10 And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless.

11 Women in like manner *must be* grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

13 For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Je'-sus.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 20. M.....	First Deacons (Acts 6: 1-15)
July 21. T.....	Deacons in Philippi (Phil. 1: 1-7)
July 22. W.....	Deacons' Qualifications (1 Tim. 3: 8-13)
July 23. T.....	Blessings of Faithfulness (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)
July 24. F.....	Reward of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4: 18)
July 25. S.....	Stewards of God (1 Cor. 4: 1-6)
July 26. S.....	Suffering for Christ (1 Cor. 4: 8-14)

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing."* (1 Tim. 3: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 6: 1-6.

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

The original word for "deacon" is *diakonos*, and it is found in the New Testament some thirty times. The primary meaning of the term is servant, minister, attendant; and, like many other words, including the term "elder," it has a general and an official meaning. Looking at the word *diakonos*, in its general or generic sense first, one finds that it is applied as follows:

(1) To Christ. (Rom. 15: 8; Gal. 2: 17.)

(2) To the apostles. (1 Cor. 3: 5; 2 Cor. 3: 6; 6: 4; Eph. 3: 7; Col. 1: 23, 25.)

(3) To those who would be first, that is, greatest. (Matt. 20: 26; 23: 11; Mark 9: 35; 10: 43.)

(4) To evangelists. (Eph. 6: 21; Col. 1: 7; 4: 7; 1 Thess. 3: 2; 1 Tim. 4: 6.)

(5) To any and every faithful servant of Christ. (John 12: 26.)

(6) To civil rulers. (Rom. 13: 4.)

(7) To emissaries of Satan. (2 Cor. 11: 15.)

(8) To attendants at festivals. (Matt. 22: 13; John 2: 5, 9.)

(9) To false apostles. (2 Cor. 11: 23.)

The word *diakonos* is also used in an "official" sense, to designate a special group of servants in the church; and when so used, the translation is "deacons," implying a plurality. (See Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 3: 8, 12; cf. Rom. 16: 1, which will be considered later on in this study.) The expression "serve as deacons" (1 Tim. 3: 10, 13) is the translation of a single word, namely, *diakoneo*. (Cf. Acts 6: 2; Luke 10: 40; John 12: 2, where the same original word is found.)

It should always be kept in mind that no New Testament church was ever placed under the oversight of deacons, or even under the direction of elders and deacons. The elders,

and the elders alone, are the divinely appointed overseers of the congregation; and at no time, and under no circumstance, are they permitted to delegate the oversight of the church to the deacons, or to anyone else. The elders may, and should, assign certain duties and responsibilities to the deacons; but even under those circumstances, the deacons must continue to serve under the oversight of the duly appointed elders. Deacons are the God-approved servants under the oversight of the elders.

The idea that deacons should be appointed to look after the affairs of the church, in the absence of elders, is completely foreign to the teaching of the New Testament. If deacons are "assistants," as the word plainly means, then a congregation can scripturally have deacons, only after elders have been appointed. The fundamental duty of deacons is clearly stated in Acts 6: 1-6. Elders who function as God intends that they should, have more important things to do, than to deal with most of the material affairs of the church.

### The Golden Text

This portion of our study for today is a part of the principal text; and it will be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### "Deacons in Like Manner"

(1 Tim. 3: 8-10)

*Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless.*

The very wording of the subject of this section of the lesson text, suggests a close relationship between elders and deacons in the Lord's church; but any one who is familiar with the teaching of the New Testament, as already indicated in this lesson, is aware of the fact that the two groups are distinct orders. Elders and deacons both have their places in the divine economy; and any one who will read and study the inspired record, will have no trouble in learning that which the Lord expects of each group. Both groups have their specific duties; and it is only when all of the men involved function as they should, that the word of the church moves forward according to the divine will.

No church of Christ has been fully set in order, which does not have both elders and deacons, as may be gathered from such passages as the following: "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." (Phil. 1: 1, 2; cf. Acts 6: 1-6.) The marginal reading for "bishops," in the passage just quoted, is *overseers*. (Cf. Acts 20: 28.) The term "bishop" and "overseer" mean precisely the same thing, when the reference is to the elders of the Lord's church, the first being of Greek origin, while the latter was derived from the Anglo-Saxon.

The elders, as we have already seen, are the divinely designated overseers (cf. 1 Tim. 5: 17) of the congregation, in which they have their membership; and all of the administrative responsibility, in connection with the work of the church, has been placed in their hands—a responsibility which is not theirs to share with any one else. This is enough to show, let it be repeated and emphasized, that the church of the New Testament is not governed by elders *and* deacons, as some seem to think. We are now ready to begin a rather detailed consideration of just what is expected of deacons in the church of the Lord; and, as such cases often demand, a great amount of repetition will be in order. The late Hall L. Calhoun said that the three laws of learning are Repetition! Repetition! Repetition!

It has already been implied in this study, and expressly stated, that deacons do not have administrative responsibility; that is, they are not charged with the responsibility of directing the affairs of the church. That responsibility has been placed

exclusively in the hands of the elders; and they alone are the overseers and rulers (under Christ, of course—1 Pet. 5: 1-4; 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13), of the congregation. Thayer defines *diakonos* (deacon) to mean "*one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant, attendant, minister.*"

The answer to the question regarding the duties of deacons, can best be found by referring to the occasion of their first appointment, as recorded in Acts 6: 1-6. If it is objected that the seven in the passage just cited were not called deacons, it may be said in reply, that the same original word (*diakoneo*), which describes the work of the men in question, is also used to indicate the work of the deacons in 1 Tim. 3: 10, 13—*serve as deacons*. The disciples of Christ were not called *Christians*, during the first few years of their history (Acts 11: 26); but that does not mean that they were not Christians, during that period! The seven men of Acts 6: 1-6 were appointed to look after the secular wants and needs of the Grecian widows of the Jerusalem church; and Milligan notes that the principle which underlay their appointment, is very broad and comprehensive.

It is well to note that looking after the temporal affairs of the early church, appears to have been all that was positively required of the first deacons; it does not seem necessary to conclude that that was all that they were permitted to do. Both Stephen and Philip became effective preachers of the gospel. (Acts 6: 8-8: 40, 21: 8.) When one considers the tremendous responsibility of the elders, it is easy to see that they must have some assistance, especially with reference to things which are only *related* to their chief business; and that is why the Lord has authorized the appointment of deacons. The deacons are assistants, helpers, servants.

It has already been suggested that some congregations seem to think that they do not have men who are qualified to serve as elders; and that when such a situation is present, they feel that they should appoint deacons, in order to have some kind of "official status," as they see the matter, in their setup. But any one who will stop to think can easily see

that such a practice is not even in keeping with the meaning and significance of the term "deacon," to say nothing of being authorized by the Lord. Deacons are assistants or helpers, and are never regarded as leaders or administrators. It is true that no mention is made of elders in the Jerusalem church, when the first deacons were appointed; but that church was under the direct oversight of the apostles; and the whole context shows that the seven were appointed to *assist* those who were already in charge of the work. The New Testament nowhere authorizes the appointment of *helpers*, in the absence of overseers.

The qualifications of deacons, as in the case of elders, are clearly set forth in the lesson text for today's study; and the expression "deacons in like manner" implies that the same high standard, which is required of elders, is also required for deacons. Any one who will read that which the Holy Spirit says about the work which deacons are expected to do, will have no trouble in seeing the need for qualifications, which are commensurate with the position which they occupy in the church. (Cf. the qualifications which the apostles required of the seven who were appointed in the Jerusalem church—Acts 6: 1-6.) The qualifications which are listed in the text now before us, as in the case of the elders, fall into three categories, namely, negative, positive, and domestic relationships; and it is the purpose of this study to consider them in the order just named.

1. *Negative qualifications.* (1) *Not double-tongued*, that is, not saying one thing, while meaning another; or making different representations to different people about the same thing; or speaking of the same thing in different tones and manners. A person who does the things just mentioned is insincere; and his purpose is to deceive. No man in a responsible place can be trusted, whose speech cannot be accepted as being true.

(2) *Not given to much wine*. The use of strong drink as a beverage is wholly incompatible with the high position which a deacon must occupy.

(3) *Not greedy of filthy lucre*.

Not "eager for base gain" (Thayer). Deacons must not seek gain by any base or dishonorable means. They must not love money, in the sense of making it first in their lives; they must not be avaricious. Men who manifest this attitude and practice, cannot be trusted to handle the material affairs of the congregation.

2. **Positive qualifications.** (1) *Grave*, that is, venerable, honorable, dignified; such as invite reverence and respect.

(2) *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.* "The faith" (the article is in the original) is equivalent to *the gospel*. (Cf. Acts 6: 7.) The gospel, in its early days, was frequently referred to as a mystery, and it was, indeed, a mystery until it was revealed. (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 6-13; Eph. 3: 1-9.) And inasmuch as the revelation which was made known was so recent, it was still referred to as a mystery when Paul wrote his epistles. To hold the faith in a pure conscience, is to have the truth of the gospel in a pure heart. A mere intellectual attitude toward the gospel, without a righteous life, is not enough; deacons must maintain a positive attitude toward the gospel, as it respects both their faith and their practice.

3. **Domestic relationships.** (1) *Let deacons be husbands of one wife.* This has the same meaning, as that which was said under similar circumstances, regarding the elders.

(2) *Ruling their children and their own houses well.* This, too, should be understood in the light of similar teaching about the elders, as was pointed out last week.

It appears from 1 Tim. 3: 10 that a preliminary examination is required, *before* deacons are appointed to office: "And let these also first be proved; and then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless." It probably is not necessary to conclude that prospective deacons are to be *formally* examined before their appointment to office; but the passage just quoted does imply that the judgment of the congregation as a whole should be obtained, as to whether or not the men in question measure up to the conditions set forth in 1 Tim. 3: 8, 9. And too, the men who are being considered for the work of deacons had probably demonstrated their faithfulness, by

engaging in the work which they would be expected to do.

But whatever may have been the precise method by which the prospective deacons were to be tested, it should be noted that any man who is unwilling for such an investigation to be made, should not be made a deacon. When it has been proved that the men who have been selected for deacons are blameless, they should then be appointed to the work. William Hendriksen notes that "this method of selecting deacons is surely far removed from the one which is suggested at times, namely, 'Maybe if we make him a deacon, he'll stop criticizing. Let's place him on the nomination for deacons. If elected, we can perhaps make something out of him.'"

### Did the Early Church Have Deaconesses?

(1 Tim. 3: 11)

*Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.*

In addition to the actual name of a woman in the New Testament, who is called "a servant [*deaconess*, margin, which is the original—*diakonon*]' of the church that is at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16: 1), Paul apparently introduces the subject of "deaconesses" in the midst of his discussion of the qualifications of deacons, as may be seen by carefully reading the passage now under consideration. G. C. Brewer points out that "the strongest indication that there were deaconesses in the early church is the language of 1 Timothy 3: 11. Right in the midst of his instructions concerning deacons the apostle says: 'Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate in all things.' 'Women!' What women? Why, those who are appointed to the diaconate. 'In like manner'—the same as the men who are appointed."

While the original *gunaikas* may be rendered either women or wives, as in the King James Version, there does not seem to be any reason for singling out the wives of deacons, any more than there is for calling attention to the wives of the elders. But since the work which is required of deacons involves duties

which can best be performed by women, it is almost certain that the reference here is to the qualifications of deaconesses. It should be observed, however, that there is no place in the economy of God for "female elders"; or, to state the same thing in another way, there is no work which elders are called upon to do, which can best be done by women. Any faithful congregation has women appointed for such work, as that just referred to, even though they are *not called* "deaconesses." The important thing, of course, is that the work be done.

In commenting on the term "deaconess" (*diakonos*) in Rom. 16: 1, Thayer says that she was "a woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted." Robert Milligan observes that "the diaconate of the primitive church was not confined to male members. Deaconesses were also appointed to attend the wants of the sick and the needy, especially of their own sex. This is evident from Rom. 16: 1 and 1 Tim. 5: 9-15. This order was continued, in the Greek church, till about the beginning of the thirteenth century, and it is to be regretted that it was ever discontinued in any church. The poor and the needy will always be with us, and will require the attention of both deacons and deaconesses, just as much as they did in the churches of Jerusalem, Cenchreae, and Ephesus."

### A Word of Encouragement for Deacons

(1 Tim. 3: 12, 13)

*Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

The service which will be rendered by faithful deacons (and deaconesses—the term *diakonos* refers to both, that is, the spelling is the same, whether masculine or feminine) will benefit, not only the recipients of the favors, but also the deacons themselves; that is, they will be made better men (and women), and will be prepared for better service. Some Bible students

think that Paul means that the men, that is, the deacons, would be in line for promotion to be eldership; but that idea is by no means certain. At least, such a motive as that should not actuate deacons in their service.

The probable meaning of the thought in the passage just referred to, is that those who serve well as deacons will be assured of an exalted position in the esteem of their fellow Christians, and will be honored accordingly. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 17; 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13.) Alford thinks that those who discharge their work as deacons faithfully, receive "a good standing place," and they will certainly have a well-grounded hope against the day of judgment. Goodspeed renders the verse now under consideration in these words: "For those who do good service as assistants gain a good standing for themselves and great confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus." The original word for "standing" is *bathmos*, and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its primary meaning is step, threshold, degree (cf. 2 Kings 20: 9). Thayer thinks that Paul has reference to a grade of dignity and wholesome influence in the church, while Arndt-Gingrich puts it this way: a "step" in the soul's journey heavenward.

Some one, in commenting on the qualifications of deacons, and the great work which engages their attention, refers to them as basic virtues and high adventure. This is to say that the church is engaged in a magnificent adventure, namely, that of taking the world for Christ; and this certainly suggests that the leaders in such an enterprise should be men whose heroic spirit is founded on character in which the basic virtues of honesty and sobriety are unquestioned. When Paul notes that those who serve as deacons must be grave, he does not mean to imply that they must be gloomy, or which is the same thing, people who have lost all the zest in life; for it is a notable fact that Paul, time and again, and under the most trying circumstances, urges his fellow Christians to rejoice in the Lord. (Cf. Phil. 3: 1; 4: 4-7.)

What the apostle Paul is urging upon those who are to serve as deacons, is that they are to engage in a



serious business, and that their demeanor and deportment should be in keeping with their assignment. The church is under obligation to do good unto all men, in so far as its ability and opportunity will permit (cf. Gal. 6: 10). The primary reference in the passage just cited is to that which is usually known as benevolent work; and when that is administered according to the Lord's will, great good will almost certainly follow. Deacons have many duties to perform, in addition to serving tables; and unless they maintain a character, and a reputation, which are above reproach, suspicion, if not indeed positive accusation of wrongdoing, will be leveled against them.

While there does not seem to be any direct evidence in the New Tes-

tament, to the effect that the way into the eldership is through the diaconate, it is, of course, true that a person who serves well as a deacon, can easily grow into the type of man who would be asked to serve as an elder. Faithful elders should be constantly on the lookout for others, and especially younger men, to replenish or augment the eldership. The best candidates for either the eldership or the diaconate, are those men who are already at work in those fields, before their names are suggested for the places. Men, according to the New Testament, are not first appointed and then trained for their respective works; rather, they are to be selected and appointed, because they have demonstrated their fitness for the positions beforehand.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is the primary meaning of the word "deacon"?  
What are some of the senses in which it is used in the New Testament?  
Show that these uses are in harmony with the basic idea of the term.  
What is meant by saying that the term "deacon" has an official sense in the New Testament?

What are some of the scriptures which justify this conclusion?  
In what way are deacons related to elders in the same congregation?

Is it ever scriptural to appoint deacons to direct the affairs of the church in the absence of elders?

Cite a New Testament passage which clearly sets forth the fundamental duty of deacons.

Why did the Lord ordain that there be deacons as well as elders in every church?

### "Deacons in Like Manner"

What does the wording of this section of the lesson suggest?

Why are the elders and deacons two distinct orders?

What are the specific duties of each group? give reasons for your answer.

When is a church fully set in order?

Why can't the elders scripturally share their responsibility of leadership with the deacons?

What relationship does Acts 6: 1-6 have with our lesson for today?

Are deacons always limited in their work to the temporal affairs of the church?

Give reasons for your answer.

Where do we learn of the qualifications of scriptural deacons?

Into what three categories are their qualifications divided?

What are the negative qualifications and their importance?

What is said regarding their positive qualifications?

Discuss their domestic relationships.

What should always be done before deacons are appointed to their place in the church?

### Did the Early Church Have Deaconesses?

What reasons can you cite for thinking that the early church did, or did not, have deaconesses?

What are the qualifications of the women who are referred to in the text?

What is the New Testament meaning of a "deaconess"?

What is the nature of the work in which women can best serve and why?

### A Word of Encouragement for Deacons

In what way will the service of deacons benefit the deacons themselves?

What are the results of their work which are promised to faithful deacons?

Why is the work of deacons so important?

Why, then, should they take their work seriously?

## Lesson V—August 2, 1970

## APOSTASY FORETOLD

## Lesson Text

1 Tim. 4: 1-11

1 But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving;

5 For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.

6 If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Je-sus, nourished

in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed *until now*:

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness:

8 For bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.

9 Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation.

10 For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.

11 These things c o m m a n d and teach.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching."* (1 Tim. 4: 16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 4: 12-16.

## Daily Bible Readings

July 27. M.....	Error to Arise in the Church (Acts 20: 28-35)
July 28. T.....	Falling Away to Come (2 Thess. 2: 1-10)
July 29. W.....	Many False Prophets (1 John 4: 1-3)
July 30. T.....	Perilous Times (2 Tim. 3: 1-9)
July 31. F.....	False Teachers (2 Pet. 2: 1-3)
August 1. S.....	Destiny of False Teachers (2 Pet. 2: 4-22)
August 2. S.....	Wolves in Sheep's Clothing (Matt. 7: 13-20)

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

One has only to read the Bible, as a matter of history, in order to see that apostasies have been the common lot of the human race from soon after the beginning of time. Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, led the way; and the example which they set has been followed in all ages of the world. Not only have people made it a common practice to rebel against God; it is a matter of record that the human race, when it was less than two thousand years old, lapsed into such

a total apostasy, as to result in the destruction of mankind, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family—eight souls in all! The human race got a new start, following the flood; but in less than a thousand years, it appears that Jehovah himself was able to find only one man, whom he could trust to do his will; and he, accordingly, called on Abram to leave his family and homeland, and go to a new location, where he could become the head of a new family of people. But then,

less than five hundred years later, the whole family of the chosen people were so completely enslaved in a foreign land, as to be almost entirely alienated from God.

Jehovah, however, did not forget his sinful and captive people, but, in due time, sent Moses to lead them out of Egyptian bondage, and begin the necessary steps which were essential to their being molded into a nation, to be known as God's peculiar people. The great liberator and national architect, in keeping with his divine commission, led the people from Egyptian bondage out into the wilderness, where they could be alone. They had not gone very far before they were given a written code of instruction, so that they could know just exactly what was expected of them. This host of captive people who were set free from the tyrants of Egypt numbered six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty men, above twenty years of age, and who were able to bear arms (the Levites excluded), besides the older men and those otherwise unfitted for military service, and the women and children. But, as every one acquainted with the inspired record knows, every one of the more than six hundred thousand able-bodied men sinned to the extent, as to preclude their entrance into the promised land, with the sole exception of Joshua and Caleb! All of this within the short space of forty years! This general rebellion included both Moses and Aaron, and it fell to the lot of Joshua, Moses' minister, to lead the younger generation into the land of Canaan, and conquer the portion of the land in which the tribes of Israel were to make their permanent home.

The people of Israel, generally speaking, remained faithful to the Lord during the lifetime of Joshua, and the elders who served with him, but outlived him; but when a new leadership arose, the people again lapsed into apostasy, to the extent that divine help was needed, in the form of God-appointed judges, to free the rebellious tribes from the nations which were despoiling them. But, as the record shows, the Lord's people were not long in returning to sin, after their victory over their enemies, with the result that an-

other period of servitude followed, and a new judge was raised up to free them again. This pattern continued throughout the period of the judges, until Samuel the prophet, who was also the last of the judges—some four hundred and fifty years!

It was at the conclusion of Samuel's judgeship that the people, in direct opposition to Jehovah's will, demanded a human king, so that they might be like the nations about them; and God told Samuel to grant their wishes; for they were rejecting Jehovah, rather than Samuel. The united kingdom continued for some one hundred and twenty years, when it was divided because of sin. The two kingdoms lasted simultaneously for approximately two hundred and fifty years, but most of the time in rebellion against God. This was especially true of the northern kingdom, which was taken into captivity by the Assyrians, and never returned to their homeland as a separate kingdom. (Cf. Ezek. 37: 15ff.)

The southern kingdom continued for another one hundred and thirty-four years, when they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, who had succeeded the Assyrians as the world power. The Babylonians held the people of Judah for seventy years (cf. 2 Chron. 36: 17-23), after which the new world ruler, Cyrus, gave all captive Jews the privilege of returning to their homeland. Some of them returned, but they were never faithful to Jehovah for long at a time, as may be seen by reading the later prophets and Nehemiah, along with the history of the period between the Testaments. When John the Baptist appeared on the scene, it was necessary to call the entire Jewish people to repentance, before they were ready for the appearance of the promised Messiah. But even at that, the people, generally speaking, did not respond to the Lord's call; but instead, in a little more than thirty years, they killed God's only Son, whom he had sent to be their Saviour. And since Christ made possible the salvation of the human race, relatively few have accepted his offer of redemption. A few hundred years after the church was established, a falling away occurred which resulted in a

total eclipse of the church, so far as history is concerned. Such has been the history of the apostasy of God's people; and any one who is acquainted with the facts in the case,

knows that things are not getting any better. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 1ff.) This therefore should be an extremely important lesson for our consideration.

### The Golden Text

*"Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching."* While this admonition was addressed to a gospel preacher, the principle is the same with reference to any faithful child of God. If every Christian would heed this inspired counseling, there would be no apostasy on the part of God's people. Thus, it can easily be seen that the question of faithfulness or infidelity, is an individual responsibility, whether with reference to preachers, church leaders, or simple Christians. The words of the golden text are found in this context: "Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 13-16.)

It has always been God's plan to have faithful proclaimers of his will to the human race; and no one has ever succeeded in this ministry, who did not take heed, (1) to himself, and (2) to his teaching. This is another way of saying that one must first be right in God's sight, and then make certain that it is speaking that which he has been authorized to say. This kind of admonition is found throughout the entire Bible; and Jesus himself saw fit to give an example of the principle, as he was nearing the close of his great sermon on the mount. "Not every one

that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day [that is, the judgment day], Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7: 21-23.)

To "prophesy" is to speak for another, or, as we would say today, to preach. The people about whom Jesus is speaking claimed to preach or teach in the name of the Lord; but they made one fatal mistake, they did not take heed, either to themselves, or to their teaching. This is made clear when Jesus declares, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The term "iniquity" means to act without authority—to say that which they had not been commanded to speak. (Cf. 1 John 3: 4, where the same original word is rendered "lawlessness.") When professed teachers of the truth proclaim error, the result is to encourage disobedience to God's will; and when that is followed, on a wide scale, an apostasy is certain to result. (Cf. Matt. 15: 14; Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Tim. 4: 1-4; 2 John 9-11.) If the man who professes to preach the gospel will make sure that he is himself acceptable to God, and will then make every effort to see to it that he preaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he can rest assured that no apostasy will result from anything for which he is responsible.

### The Text Explained

#### A Departure from the Faith Predicted

(1 Tim. 4: 1-5)

*But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men*

*that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing*

*is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.*

When one studies the Bible, it is always in order to consider the immediate context of any passage of scripture; and a fuller context, if that becomes essential. Something of the significance of this can easily be seen, if one will read the preceding paragraph, that is, the closing verses of chapter 3 (there were, of course, no chapters and verses in Paul's original letter): "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 passage just quoted may be thought of as the "norm of faith," that is, that which men are expected to believe regarding Jesus, if they are to please God. However, chapter 4 opens with an adversative conjunction (but), which introduces or calls the reader's attention to a contrast, as it respects the attitude of people toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We have already seen something of the history of the human race in this respect; and now we are to see the process at work in the Christian dispensation. "Later times" has reference to the present age, apparently, not to any particular period, but at various intervals; or, departures from the faith will recur, throughout the Christian dispensation. This is enough to cause people to stop and think.

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

human race, will continue as long as time shall last. When Paul was concluding his third missionary journey, he called the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him in Miletus, and pronounced this word of warning to them: "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; cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3ff.)

Thus, instead of remaining loyal to the word of the Lord, some, including elders and other teachers in the church, will give heed to heretical perverters of the gospel, or Which is the same thing, seducing spirits, and doctrines inspired by demons. (Cf. 1 John 4: 1-6.) It seems fair to assume, from Rev. 2:

2, that Paul's instruction through Timothy must have had a profound effect on the church in Ephesus; but it should be kept in mind that sound doctrine alone is not enough; love for and devotion to the truth must fill the heart, and overflow into the life. (Read Rev. 2: 1-7; cf. 2 Thess. 2: 8-12.)

The expression "through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies" shows that men, that is, human teachers, are the agents through whom the seductive teaching is done, and the doctrine of demons is propagated. Such men are false teachers; and, while they claim to preach the truth, they are in reality speaking lies. (Read Matt. 7: 15-23.) Furthermore, the fact that such teachers are characterized by hypocrisy, is sufficient to show that they are not true to the faith, which has been delivered to the saints. (Cf. Jude 3.) These hypocritical teachers simply try to make their hearers think that they are what they are not. The reason that they can engage in such nefarious work, is that their conscience has been branded as with a hot iron. This means that the conscience of such false teachers no longer disturbs them, so that they can go right on teaching falsehood, must as if it

were the truth. (Cf. Tit. 1: 15; 3: 11; Eph. 4: 19.) Anything which is contrary to God's revealed will, is false; and it may be described as a falsehood, or a lie. Thus, to teach any one that he can please God, and be acceptable to him, without obeying that which he has made known through revelation and inspiration, is to be guilty of lying. (Cf. Jer. 29: 8, 9; 2 Cor. 11: 13-15; 1 Cor. 4: 6; Gal. 2: 4; Phil. 1: 15-17; Tit. 1: 10, 11; 2 Pet. 2: 1-3.)

The form which the falling away, as pictured here by Paul, would take, is described as a spurious asceticism, or false spiritualism; and two of the tenets, which characterize the false teachers, were (1) forbidding to marry, and (2) commanding to abstain from meats. Albert Barnes, in commenting on the term "meats," says, "The word *meat* in the Scriptures, commonly denotes *food* of all kinds. (Matt. 3: 4; 6: 25; 10: 10; 15: 37.) This was the meaning of the word when the translation of the Bible was made. It is now used by us, almost exclusively, to denote animal food. The word here used — *brōma* — means, properly, whatever is eaten, and may refer to animal flesh, fish, fruit, or vegetables. It is often, however, in the New Testament, employed particularly to denote the flesh of animals. (Heb. 9: 10; 13: 9; Rom. 14: 15, 20; 1 Cor. 8: 8, 13.) As it was animal food particularly which was forbidden under the Jewish code, and as the questions on this subject among Christians would relate to the same kinds of prohibition, it is probable that the word has the same limited signification here, and should be taken as meaning the same thing that the word *meat* does with us."

Vincent points out that the practices referred to by Paul, in the passage now before us, were true of the Essenes during the time of Christ, and strong traces of the same practices appeared in the heresy which was condemned by Paul in his letter to the Colossians. That which the Essenes did in the time of Christ, and the Colossian heresy, were history when Paul wrote to Timothy; but it is clear from the apostle's words, that the same practices would be continued in the years ahead; or to say the same thing in

another way, history would continue to repeat itself. Such false austerity gains for its adherents a show of sanctity, while they continue to preach error. (Cf. Col. 2: 8, 23.)

Gen. 1: 31 declares that everything which God made was good; and it is still good, if it is received as God intended that it should be. (Cf. Rom. 14: 14.) We also learn from Gen. 9: 1-3 that animal food, that is, meat, was ordained as food for people, although the blood must always be removed before the flesh is consumed. The ascetic teaching against meat as a properly constituted item of food, therefore, is in direct opposition to the plan and purpose of God; and what is true in this respect, is also true with regard to the prohibition against marriage. (Cf. Gen. 2: 18-24; Heb. 13: 4; 1 Tim. 5: 14, 15.) But it should be carefully noted, that in the matter of eating our daily food, God expects his children to recognize that he is the Giver of all of these blessings, and that they are to acknowledge that truth by giving thanks for that which they eat. (Cf. Acts 27: 35; 1 Sam. 9: 13; John 6: 11; Matt. 15: 36.) The Lord's people therefore should always offer thanks for their food, either before partaking of it, or at least sometime during the time of their eating; for our food is "sanctified through the word of God and prayer."

### The Responsibility of a Good Minister

(1 Tim. 4: 6-9)

*If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith, and of the good doctrine which thou hast followed until now: but refuse profane and old wives' fables. And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance.*

The apostle Paul, in this section of the lesson text, explained to his son in the faith, just what it means to be a good minister in the Lord's service. The original word for "minister," is the same from which we have the term "deacon;" but it is

obvious that the meaning here is *servant*, without any official significance. "These things" refer to that which the apostle said in the preceding section of the lesson text; and particularly to the things which he said with reference to the spurious asceticism, and the proper attitude toward the use of meat as food for human beings. The original term for "nourished" is the present passive participle; and it implies a continuous source of spiritual strength for the servant of the Lord who takes his work seriously. That which Paul said to Timothy was, and is, the way to be a good minister of Jesus Christ. That process, however, was not new to Timothy; for he had known something about it from his childhood years. (Cf. 2 Tim. 1: 5; 3: 15.) The "words of the faith are the words of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 6: 3; 1 Tim. 1: 13; Acts 6: 7); while the "good doctrine" is explanatory of *the faith*.

But there are some things to be avoided, as well as some things to do, if one is to be a good minister of the Lord. He must refuse, that is reject or have nothing to do with, "profane," that is, unhallowed or common, and old wives' fables. These were probably the fictions or inventions "concerning the emanations and order of the aeons" (Thayer) of the false teachers of Ephesus. They are called "old wives' fables," because they were such as old women regarded as being important; but they were profane, because they led away from godliness, and all that is pleasing to God. Timothy was exhorted to answer the erroneous teachers, by exercising himself unto godliness; by living a godly life. "Bodily exercise" probably referred to the ascetic practices of false teachers.

### The End in View

(1 Tim. 4: 10, 11)

*For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe. These things command and teach.*

The labor and striving were with reference to a life of godliness, so that Paul and Timothy might have a life with the Father who is in

heaven; and that should, and must, be our aim, if we are to succeed in the Christian life. Paul's entire life was but a confirmation of the assertion now before us. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9, 10.) The words "labor" and "strive" denote strenuous and painful efforts; and when one takes into consideration the significance of the motive of the passage just cited, he will readily agree that there is no sacrifice which is too great to make in the service of the Lord.

Paul always had a goal before him, that is, something toward which he worked; and all of his activities were motivated by his hope in the living God. The Lord had saved him from sin, and had promised him a home in heaven; and he had every confidence in that promise, so much so, that he was always ready and willing to suffer for the cause of Christ. (Cf. 2 Tim. 1: 12; Phil. 3: 12.) God is *potentially* the Saviour of all men, and has made it plain that he wants all men to be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9); but it is not true that he will save all men, regardless of their attitude toward him. He is *potentially* the Saviour of all men, but *actually* saves "them that believe." (Cf. Mark 16: 15, 16; Tit. 2: 11, 12; Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

From the standpoint of time, and especially with reference to our coming to the Lord, teaching precedes commanding; but since the term "command" can be used only in relation to fundamentals, which already have been recognized and accepted as being true, it was proper, of course, for Timothy to command the people in question to heed the things which he taught, and to teach them regarding the consequences which would follow their rejection of the divine injunction. The teacher of God's word is authorized to make known the will of the Lord, and to warn and encourage all who listen to his teaching. Both the teacher and the taught are under tremendous responsibility in this respect. And when professed Christians who know the truth and are not doing it, are within reach, the good minister of Christ Jesus is under obligation to command and teach them that which the Lord has spoken.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What has been the history of the human race with reference to apostasy? Why?  
What has always been Jehovah's attitude toward his recreant people? Why?  
Trace the history of the disobedience of mankind from the beginning to the end of Bible history.

### The Golden Text

Why is the admonition of the golden text so important to us?  
What would be the result, if this exhortation were heeded by every teacher of God's word?  
What light did Jesus throw upon this issue?  
What fatal mistake did the people refer to in Matt. 7: 21-23 make?

### A Departure from the Faith Predicted

In what general context is this section of the lesson text found?  
Why is it important to consider the context of any given passage of scripture?  
What important contrast does the apostle Paul point out here?  
To what period of the Christian dispensation is reference made?  
What apparent effect did Paul's warning have on the church in Ephesus?  
What form did Paul say that the apostasy now before us would take?  
When does a professed preacher of the gospel speak lies?  
What is hypocrisy and who is a hypocrite?

How can a professed teacher of the truth content himself with teaching error?  
Why did the propagators of the apostasy forbid marriage and the eating of meats?  
What does the Bible teach regarding "meat" as an item of food for the human race?  
What should the Lord's people always do when eating their food and why?

### The Responsibility of a Good Minister

What is Paul's purpose in this section of the lesson text?  
What things should a good minister bring to the attention of his hearers?  
In what way will such a person continue to receive strength for his ministry?  
How does Paul speak of the word of the Lord in this part of the lesson text?  
What are some of the things which a good minister should avoid?  
How did Paul want Timothy to answer the heretics?  
What does it mean for one to exercise himself unto godliness?  
What does "bodily exercise" probably refer to?

### The End in View

In what were Paul and Timothy laboring and striving?  
What evidence did Paul cite which shows that that was always his aim in life?  
What do the terms "labor" and "strive" indicate?  
Why could the apostle Paul always show such zeal and enthusiasm in his work for Christ?  
In what sense is God the Saviour of all men?

## Lesson VI—August 9, 1970

## DUTIES OF PREACHERS AND ELDERS

### Lesson Text

#### 1 Tim. 5: 1-7, 17-25

1 Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brethren:

2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, in all purity.

3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

6 But she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7 These things also command, that they may be without reproach.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.

18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses.

20 Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear.

21 I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Je-sus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.



22 Lay hands hastily on no man,  
neither be partaker of other men's  
sins: keep thyself pure.

23 Be no longer a drinker of water,  
but use a little wine for thy stomach's  
sake and thine often infirmities.

24 Some men's sins are evident,  
going before unto judgment; and  
some men also they follow after.

25 In like manner also there are  
good works that are evident; and  
such as are otherwise cannot be hid.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"These things command and teach."* (1 Tim. 4: 11.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 5: 8-16.

Daily Bible Readings

August 3. M..... Gospel to Be Preached (Mark 16: 15, 16)  
August 4. T..... Word to Be Defended (Jude 3-7)  
August 5. W..... False Teachers Rebuked (1 Tim. 1: 1-7)  
August 6. T..... Erring to Be Warned (2 Thess. 3: 1-12)  
August 7. F..... Weak to Be Encouraged (1 Thess. 5: 14-25)  
August 8. S..... Churches to Be Set in Order (Tit. 1: 4-11)  
August 9. S..... Needy to Be Helped (Acts 6: 1-7; James 1: 27)

TIME.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.  
PLACES.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in  
Ephesus.  
PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

Introduction

We have already, during this quarter, studied the qualifications and duties of elders; but this should not cause us any great concern, for two reasons, namely, (1) one of the basic laws of learning is repetition, repetition, repetition; and (2) no one can consider all the duties of elders in a single lesson, that is, a lesson which is limited, as these studies necessarily are, with reference to both time and content. The apostle Paul, in writing to one of his sons in the gospel, says, "Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Tim. 3: 1.) It is easy to see that the apostle places the emphasis on the *work* of elders, rather than on their position or office.

There is, in fact, no word in the original of the passage just quoted for "office"; and any thoughtful observer is aware of the fact that there are all too many elders, who regard themselves as "officials," rather than as leaders. State and other governmental officials are sometimes criticized, for their failure to provide adequate leadership for the cause which they represent; and the same situation is often true of the elders in the Lord's church. There are few questions, regarding the eldership, which deserve more consideration than that of a functioning eldership, that is, an eldership which is doing that which God has ordained for it.

Any one who is acquainted with the teaching of the New Testament, knows that it is the Lord's will that men, whom we know today as preachers of the gospel, have a place in the divine economy. A preacher, as used in this lesson, is one who proclaims the word of the Lord, and teaches the truth which is contained in the Bible. The idea which is being stressed here is not that of so-called "professional" preachers, but those who are dedicated to the work of seeing to it that the gospel, or, which is the same thing, the word of the Lord, is made known to those who should hear it. The duty of such men may be learned from many parts of the New Testament; but there is, perhaps, no clearer or more comprehensive statement of that obligation, than that which is contained in the following passage:

"I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in

all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy

ministry." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5; cf. 1 Tim. 3: 14, 15; 2 Tim. 2: 22-26.)

### The Golden Text

*"These things command and teach."* It should be observed at the outset of this study, that not just any man who claims to be a gospel preacher, is in position to command and teach, with the hope of being successful in his endeavor. But when a man prepares himself, as Paul exhorted Timothy to do, those who have any desire to please the Lord, are going to listen to that which the preacher has to say. Timothy was evidently a relatively young man, at the time of this lesson; but he was armed with the authority of an inspired apostle, and the following quotation shows us why he could himself speak with authority:

"These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee." (1 Tim. 4: 11-16.)

The ministry of preaching has been a custom among the followers of Christ, since the beginning of his kingdom, nearly two thousand years ago. This kind of work was responsible, perhaps more than any other, for the rapid growth and develop-

ment of the early church. But it is a truth, not always recognized or realized, that no preacher can fulfil his mission, unless people understand something of how he is prepared to serve them. (Cf. the work of a physician, a lawyer, or a school teacher.) Every person who has any conception of what it means to be faithful to Christ, readily understands that all preaching, which meets with his approval, must be based on, and in harmony with, that which is contained in the Bible. (Cf. Tit. 2: 1, 7, 8, 15.)

Preachers are looked upon as leaders of men, and that is as it should be, especially if they are faithful to the truth, and whose lives are above reproach; but if they are not permitted to offer the benefit of their knowledge and experience, they are to that extent handicapped in the possibilities of their service. Since preachers are constantly dealing with God's word, it is reasonable to assume, of course, that they should know more about the Bible, than any other class of men; and it is quite natural, when one has a question which concerns him, for him to go to the preacher for some assistance. Any faithful preacher of the gospel should always be willing and ready to render whatever help he is able to offer; and he should be able to tell whether or not it is a Bible subject, and, if so, what the Scriptures teach on the subject. The preacher should also be ready and willing to teach the truth, whenever and wherever he has the opportunity, whether he is asked to or not.

### The Text Explained

#### Something of the Preacher's General Attitude toward Others

(1 Tim. 5: 1-7)

*Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father; the younger men as brethren: the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow hath children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety to-*

*wards their own family, and to requite their parents: for this is acceptable in the sight of God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth. These things also command, that they may be without reproach.*

Any faithful gospel preacher, in

the course of his ministry, will at times have to try to correct the faults of others; but if he is going to be successful in such endeavors, and pleasing to the Lord, he must take into consideration his own attitude toward those who are at fault. The preacher's aim should be to save, rather than to drive the wrongdoer further into sin. "And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will." (2 Tim. 2: 24-26.)

The people who make up an average congregation are listed as older men and women, and younger men and women. Paul was not referring to elders, in the sense of overseers of the church, but simply to the older men of the church. The first two verses of this section of the lesson text are rendered in The Twentieth Century New Testament in these words: "Do not reprimand an older man, but plead with him as if he were your father. Treat the young men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters—with all purity." When a preacher manifests that kind of attitude toward the people with whom he works, he will be in a much better position to influence them for good. There may be times, of course, when kindness will not suffice; but the preacher himself must always make certain that he does not fall into sin, while trying to rescue others from the clutches of the evil one. (Cf. 2 Cor. 13: 10; Tit. 1: 13.)

The average congregation will almost certainly have women in it, who have lost their husbands, and who are therefore widows; and the gospel preacher may be called upon to deal with some of them, or, at least, to teach the truth regarding God's will for them. Those women, who are widows indeed, should have both the sympathetic understanding, and the Christlike consideration of the preacher. The Greek term *timaō*, from which we have the word "honor," is found several times in the New Testament; and if

one will read the following passages, which contain the term, it will be relatively easy for him to see that it means for one to honor another person, in the sense of financial or material support. (See Mark 7: 10-13; Acts 28: 10; cf. 1 Tim. 5: 17, where the noun form is found.) The idea therefore involves more than respectful treatment; it implies that the needy person's material wants be met. This was the practice of the church from its beginning, as may be seen by reading the first few chapters of Acts.

The widow indeed, mentioned here by Paul, was not only without material resources; she also was without relatives or close friends, who could and would supply her needs. Being destitute, she places her trust in God; and it is this great Benefactor who gives his people, or, which is the same thing, his church, both the privilege and the obligation of seeing to it that this godly woman does not suffer for her daily bread, and other necessities of life. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10.) However, if a widow has close relatives, it is their duty, to the best of their ability, to supply her needs. The widow indeed stands in marked contrast with the widow who gives herself to pleasure. Paul's statement is, "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. *But* she that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." The gospel preacher, therefore, is under obligation to command that people do God's will regarding widows, and all things else in the church; and the people should understand that he is indeed speaking for God.

### Elders, Too, Are to Be Honored

(1 Tim. 5: 17, 18)

*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire.*

It is easy to see from 1 Thess. 5: 12, 13, that *all* the elders are entitled to the high esteem of their fellow Christians. The passage says, "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." However, in the passage now before us, the implication is that *some* elders discharge their administrative functions, more efficiently than others do. This is probably true because, in addition to their natural fitness, they exercise more diligence and devote more time to the work. Such men, says Paul, should be counted worthy of "double honor," that is, honor above and beyond that which is due all the elders, and particularly those who perform their duties somewhat perfunctorily.

The double honor, according to Paul, should be accorded those elders who faithfully carry out the arduous duties of teaching and preaching; and it evidently includes financial remuneration for their services, if indeed it is not limited to that, in this particular instance, especially in the light of verse 18. (Cf. 1 Pet. 5: 2.) The original word for "honor," as already indicated, is *time*, which some scholars render *honorarium* or *compensation*. (See Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, pp. 587f.) Williams renders 1 Tim. 5: 17, 18 in these words: "Elders who do their duties well should be considered as deserving twice the salary they get, especially those who keep on toiling in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You must not muzzle an ox when he is treading out the grain,' and 'The workman deserves his pay.'"

But, as Barackman notes, "money is not everything." A worthy elder wants more than to be paid well, and then ignored. If a man has the ability to instruct the Lord's people, he both merits and wants sympathetic consideration from his fellow members of the body of Christ. "Double honor," therefore, may include everything which a godly elder is entitled to, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. An elder who rules well is one who seeks to keep the church at peace, and who succeeds in keeping as many as possible busy in the work which God has ordained for his people. It is always a good thing when the right kind of an eld-

ers can devote his entire time to the work of leading and directing those under his care in the way of the Lord; and if they need financial support, it should be given to them.

### The Relationship of Preachers and Elders

(1 Tim. 5: 19-25)

*Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear. I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities. Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after. In like manner also there are good works that are evident; and such as are otherwise cannot be hid.*

Allowing for any peculiar power and authority, which the evangelist, or, as we usually speak of him today, the preacher may have had during the early days of the church, and particularly during the age of miracles, we must recognize the fact that a gospel preacher today, has just as much, and just as secure, a place in the church, as the elder has. And while their work is not always mutually exclusive, they both have peculiar duties which must be faithfully performed, if they are to meet with God's approval. Any average observer knows that shameful situations are often created by both preachers and elders, sometimes acting in unison, and sometimes separately. It frequently appears that each group thinks that it has authority over, and should therefore control the other. If the people of the Lord will follow his teaching with reference to preachers and elders, there will be no conflict between the two groups.

One gathers from the history of the New Testament, that one of the primary responsibilities of the first evangelists, or preachers, was to preach the gospel where it had not gone, and establish churches wher-

ever they were able to bring their converts into working bodies. These evangelists apparently kept in touch with those who were brought into Christ; and when they were ready, elders were appointed in every such church. This does not mean, however, that these preachers were not to work with churches that had elders. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, when he 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.) If the passage just quoted is read in the light of Acts 20: 28-30, it appears quite likely that the "certain men," referred to, were, in part at least, the Ephesian elders who were "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Paul also told Timothy, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3: 14, 15.) This is enough to show that Timothy, as a gospel preacher, had something to say in a church which had elders. It was his business to know what the Lord wanted done, and it was his duty to make known the Lord's will; and what was true then, is also true now. This, however, does not mean, nor imply, that the preacher is over the elders and the church. Elders can do wrong just like any one else, and it is the obligation of the faithful gospel preacher, who may be there, to declare the word of God without fear or favor.

Elders are often accused of many things, but Timothy was charged not to receive such an accusation against an elder, unless it was duly supported by two or three witnesses. However, it is fair to assume that if such accusation against an elder proves to be valid, then he should be dealt with appropriately. While elders who are faithful must be duly respected, it should be noted that if they sin, not only is the wrongdoing not to be glossed over; they are to

be reproved in the sight of all, so that the rest of the elders may be in fear. Vincent notes that "elders, who, by reason of their public position (*proestōtes*), should receive public rebuke."

The faithful gospel preacher must show no favoritism; he must deal with each person, and each situation, on a firm, fair, and scriptural basis. It is the preacher's duty to preach and teach the word; and that suggests a modern-day problem which must be dealt with. Does the eldership have the right to limit, and otherwise direct the scope and content of the preacher's work? If the elders of a congregation, for example, engage the services of a preacher, do they have the right to tell him what he may, and what he may not, preach and teach? It goes without saying, of course, that the elders must not permit the preacher, either to preach error, or to refrain from preaching all truth which is relevant to any given situation.

But suppose the eldership is not fully informed on some vital questions which are confronting the church, and are not as zealous as they should be, would the preacher be justified in preaching and teaching on those question, in a scriptural and reasonable manner, against the wishes of the elders? And, too, what should the preacher do, if the elders should forbid his preaching and teaching on such issues? Inasmuch as the preacher, in effect, if not indeed actually, agreed to work under the oversight of the elders, it might be best, for the sake of the peace of the congregation, for him to resign; but if the issues in question are vital to pleasing the Lord, he cannot afford to remain silent on that which the Lord wants preached. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) The question here is not that of an ill-informed preacher, and one who lacks good judgment; the issue is similar to that of the lesson text—Timothy and his relationship with some of the teachers, probably some of the elders, in Ephesus. Of course, if both the preacher and the elders are striving to please the Lord, situations, such as have been referred to in this lesson, will be few and far between. Any preacher or any elder who is indifferent to the progress of the truth, as it is in Christ

Jesus, cannot be pleasing to the Lord. In the words of William Cullen Bryant,

Truth, crushed to earth shall rise again.—

The eternal years of God are hers;

But error, wounded, writhes in pain,

And dies among his worshippers.

The admonition to "lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins," probably refers to Timothy's action with reference to the ordination of elders. He was not to have any part in appointing any man to the eldership, without due consideration, lest he himself should be guilty of having part in placing an unacceptable man in that position. If that should happen, Timothy would himself be guilty, that is, he would partake of such a man's sin, unless he exercise due caution in the matter. Timothy was under obligation to keep himself pure.

The entire section of the lesson text we are now considering has to do with Timothy and his relationship to the elders of the church. Paul was telling Timothy what he should do with reference to those

men who make up the eldership, both with reference to their appointment and their tenure of service. It appears that Timothy was affected by some kind of stomach disorder, which made it unwise for him to confine his "liquid-intake" to water, perhaps water which was not altogether pure; and he therefore was urged to take a little wine for medicinal purposes. Paul's advice to Timothy cannot correctly be used to encourage "social-drinking," or to justify the drinking of wine and similar products purely as beverages.

Hendriksen, in commenting on verses 24, 25, says, "In connection with men who are being considered for office, you need not be unduly concerned if you exercise due caution. In the case of men who are *unfit*, their *sins*, which render them unfit, are often evident even before an investigation into their character is begun; and if they are not evident *before*, they will become evident upon investigation. And in the case of men who are *fit*, their noble *deeds*, which show that they are qualified, are generally clearly evident even prior to investigation; and if not before, then afterward."

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the principal thesis of our lesson for today?

What is the New Testament relationship between preachers and elders?

Why is a lesson like this so important for our day?

### The Golden Text

What does the right to command and teach presuppose regarding a gospel preacher?

In what way was Timothy prepared for this kind of ministry?

How should gospel preachers be regarded by faithful churches today?

### Something of the Preacher's General Attitude Toward Others

What general attitude should gospel preachers manifest toward others, especially those in error?

In what way does Paul refer to the people who make up the average congregation?

Under what circumstances should gospel preachers talk firmly and plainly to wrongdoers?

Who is a "widow indeed" and to what honor is she entitled?

What "contrast" does Paul mention regarding widows?

### Elders, Too, Are to Be Honored

How should all the elders be regarded by the entire congregation?

What "double honor" does Paul have reference to in this section of the lesson text?

Upon what basis is the difference to be made among the elders as a whole?

In what does this "extra honor" consist?

Why should the elders who devote their full time to the work receive financial aid?

How do we know that "full time workers" in the church should be supported financially?

What do godly elders value above material support?

What does it mean for an elder to rule well?

### The Relationship of Preachers and Elders

What is the preacher's place or position in the church?

In what special way are he and the elders related to each other?

Why are elders and preachers both needed in the Lord's work?

What was the primary responsibility of the early evangelists?

What responsibility did they have in setting churches in order?

What peculiar place did Timothy occupy in the church in Ephesus?

How many of his duties, if any, were limited to the age of miracles?

What attitude was Timothy under obligation to manifest toward, and with reference to the elders?

Do elders have the God-given right to limit the preaching and teaching of preachers?

In what way should the preacher be influenced in appointing elders?

Is it right for Christians to engage in social drinking? Give reasons for your answer.

What does Paul say about the fitness or unfitness of men for the eldership?

Lesson VII—August 16, 1970

A TRUST COMMITTED TO TIMOTHY

Lesson Text

1 Tim. 6: 11-21

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.

13 I charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Je'-sus, who before Pon'-tius Pi'-late witnessed the good confession;

14 That thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Je'-sus Christ:

15 Which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can

see: to whom be honor and power eternal. A-men'.

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

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

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

20 O Tim'-o-thy, guard that which is committed unto *thee*, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called;

21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.

Grace be with you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*” (1 Tim. 6: 6.)

Devotional Reading.—1 Tim. 6: 1-10.

Daily Bible Readings

- August 10. M.....A Trust Committed to Adam (Gen. 1: 28-31)
- August 11. T.....A Trust Committed to Noah (Gen. 6: 14-22)
- August 12. W.....A Trust Committed to Abram (Gen. 12: 1-4)
- August 13. T.....A Trust Committed to Saul (1 Sam. 15: 1-6)
- August 14. F.....Saul's Failure to Keep the Trust (1 Sam. 15: 8-23)
- August 15. S.....Blessings of Faithfulness (Psalm 89: 13-18)
- August 16. S.....Consequence of Apostasy (Heb. 6: 4-8)

Time.—Probably in the period of A.D. 65-67.

Places.—Paul was in Macedonia, probably in Philippi; Timothy was in Ephesus.

Persons.—Paul and Timothy.

Introduction

It is the view of some Bible students, based on what appears to be satisfactory evidence, that Paul made his proposed journey to Spain; and that, upon his return from that country, he made the visit

to Ephesus, which is referred to in 1 Timothy. When the apostle arrived in the Asian city, he found that the predictions which he had made regarding some of the Ephesian elders (Acts 20: 28-30) were actually being fulfilled. Heretical teachers were present in the church there, when Paul arrived in Ephesus; and something needed to be done immediately, in order to counteract and bring to a halt their pernicious influence. (See 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4, 18-20.) It is evident, from his letters to Timothy and Titus, that Paul was hindered by many other duties from remaining in one place, for as long as his presence was needed. He probably felt that his time on earth

was limited, and he was therefore hurrying from place to place, in an effort to accomplish as much as possible, before he was called away entirely from the scene of his earthly labors. At any rate, Paul felt that he should visit Macedonia; and he, accordingly, urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus, and do what he could to cope with the situation there.

Our lesson for today is the last in the present series on First Timothy. It has been repeatedly stated, throughout these studies, that Timothy was Paul's son in the gospel, and that Ephesus was the recipient of a letter from the Lord himself. (See Rev. 2: 1-7.)

### The Golden Text

***"Godliness with contentment is great gain."*** This passage should be considered in the light of its context, namely, "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall therewith be content." (1 Tim. 6: 3-8.)

It appears that Paul, in the passage just quoted, is contrasting the attitude of the true teacher of Christianity, with that of those who are seeking for material gain—"supposing that godliness is a way of gain." One of the basic truths set forth in the New Testament, is that one must be properly motivated, if his service is to be acceptable to God. The false teachers about whom Paul was writing to Timothy apparently had the wrong motive, so far as their own teaching was concerned, and also endeavored to inspire the wrong motive in those whom they taught, possibly the "servants" of 1 Tim. 6: 1, 2. The likelihood is that the false teachers

were trying to generate in the slaves a feeling which would lead them to expect unusual material gains, if they would accept their version of Christianity. Verses 9 and 10 seems to confirm this idea: "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." This kind of teaching, that is, the false teaching which Paul was condemning, would tend to alienate the servants from their masters, and deceive them into thinking that great material gains would be theirs, if they accepted the "Christianity" which was represented to them.

But Paul wanted Timothy to know, and all others through him, that godliness, which apparently is used as a synonym of religion, or, as in this case, Christianity (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 5), is a way of gain, if it is characterized by contentment. The original word for "contentment" is found only twice in the New Testament, here and 2 Cor. 9: 8, and the basic idea is that of self-sufficiency, or enough of everything. When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian brethren, he used the term "content," which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. This word, too, means self-sufficiency.



Paul was independent of external circumstance, because he found in Christ all his needs. The sense in which Paul used the terms "content" and "contentment" is expressed in these words: "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 whatsoever 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 strengthened me." (Phil. 4: 10-13.)

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Stirring Appeal to Timothy

(1 Tim. 6: 11-16)

*But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.*

*1 charge thee in the sight of God, who giveth life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen.*

The expression "man of God" is evidently used in the sense of one who is devoted to the service of God, in contrast with false teachers or those who are concerned with the things of the world. A *man of God* in the Old Testament frequently referred to a prophet, whom Jehovah had sent to teach the people. The expression "man of God" is found in 2 Tim. 3: 17, where its meaning appears to be extended to include any man who is faithful to the Lord, that is, any man who faithfully adheres to that which God ordains for his people, both as it respects teaching and practice. These are the only two instances of the phrase's occurrence in the New Testament. The "things" which Paul exhorted Timothy to flee, were the motive and the conduct of the false teachers, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, along with the desire to be

rich. Some one has noted that the love of money in ministers does more to discredit religion in the eyes of ordinary people, than would indulgences in many grosser vices. (Cf. Heb. 13: 5, 6; 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.)

When one is told to flee something, he is usually told which way to go; and in the case of the Lord's people, the sense of direction should be in the mind and heart. But as it is, many people, in their flight from Rome, bypass Jerusalem; simply because they do not know where they are going. But when Paul told Timothy to flee something, he signified a goal toward which he was to travel; and he indicated the traits of character, which were essential for him to have, in order to make the journey successfully.

*Righteousness*, as used in the text now before us, is the proper relationship which we should maintain toward our fellow men, that is, moral rectitude according to God's law. (Cf. Acts 24: 25.) *Godliness* is our relationship toward God, that is, our duty toward him. (See Tit. 2: 11, 12.) *Faith*, a fundamental principle of the Christian religion, is the basis for both righteousness and godliness. This is to say that when people have genuine faith, they will manifest the proper attitude toward both God and man. *Love*, another fundamental principle of Christianity, is the rule by which faith works. (Cf. 1 John 5: 3; Gal. 5: 6.) *Patience* is stedfastness. (Rom. 5: 3-5; James 1: 2-4.) *Meekness* is gentleness of strength; stedfastness in the reception of injuries, while believing that God will vindicate us. (See Rom. 12: 17-21.)

The use of the definite article in verse 12 should not be overlooked: *The* good fight of *the* faith; *the* life eternal; *the* good confession. The

gospel preacher is not called upon to fight just any fight; he must fight the fight which *the* faith, that is, the gospel, authorizes. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 7.) The life eternal is the life which comes from God; and there are two aspects of eternal life set forth in the New Testament, namely, (1) quality, and (2) duration. We lay hold on eternal life, when we meet the conditions on which it is offered; and then endeavor to guard it, until it becomes our eternal possession in heaven. The good confession was evidently the confession which Timothy made when he became a Christian, probably in Lystra. (See Acts 14: 8-20; 16: 1-3.) The Lord's people are expected to confess their faith in Christ frequently. (Cf. Heb. 13: 15.)

Paul reminded Timothy that he made the good confession in the sight of many witnesses, apparently human witnesses; but he wanted him to keep in mind the fact that his confession involved a solemn commitment to God, who preserves all things alive (see marginal note), and to Jesus, who also witnessed the good confession. The confession which Jesus made was, in effect, his testimony to the whole truth regarding himself and his mission to the earth; and which is summed up in the religious system which he set in motion, namely, Christianity. (See John 18: 33, 37.)

Timothy, in his confession, bore witness to the same great truth; and what was true in the case of Timothy, is also true in our case, and in the case of all others who make the good confession. (Cf. Rom. 10: 9, 10.) We should keep in mind that the confession referred to in the Roman passage, just cited, is no more limited to the confession which one makes when he becomes a Christian, than is his faith. The faithful child of God *continues* to believe, and to confess his faith in Christ, all through his Christian life. (Cf. Heb. 10: 23; 2 Cor. 9: 13.) And it was under these solemn circumstances that Paul charged Timothy to keep the commandment, faithfully and continuously, as long as he lived. The *commandment* evidently refers to the whole body of the truth of the New Testament; or, which is the same thing, all that

which is summed up in Christianity. (Cf. Eph. 5: 27; James 1: 27; 1 Thess. 3:13.)

The reference to "its own times" (the margin has *his*) shows that Paul did not claim to know when the second coming of Christ will take place. (Cf. Matt. 24: 36; Acts 1: 7.) If the plural "times" is significant, the probable meaning is that they involve the successive manifestations and fulfillments, which are predicted in such passages as Matt. 24. But when Christ does come, it shall then be seen who is the absolute Ruler. The expressions "King of kings, and "Lord of lords," illustrate and emphasize Jehovah's sovereignty. It appears that all that Paul was saying, was intended to impress upon Timothy's mind the seriousness of the charge, which was given to him. No one but God, in the absolute sense of the term, has immortality. He was not derived from, nor according to the will, of any other; he is the Self-existent One. He alone therefore has endless existence as his nature. (Cf. John 5: 26.) If no one can gaze at the sun, which is but a small part of creation, for any appreciable length of time, because of its brightness, heat, and power; how much less can a mortal being look upon God's inexpressible glory! No one in the flesh therefore has ever, or can ever see God. Our duty and privilege is to glorify and honor him here; and then, in that world to come, we shall see his face for ever! What a glorious thought!

### The Responsibility of the Rich

(1 Tim. 6: 17-19)

*Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth m richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed.*

Paul, at this point in his letter, returns more specifically, to the charge which he was giving to Timothy; and this is further proof that gospel preachers are responsible for

teaching the word of the Lord on all subjects, which affect the salvation of the people with whom they are associated. Preachers are not at liberty to choose only those subjects which they like to discuss; they are under direct obligation to proclaim the full will of the Lord, which has been revealed in the New Testament. (See 2 Tim. 2: 2; Acts 20: 24-27; cf. Ezek. 33: 1-16.) Many people will probably be lost, because some professed gospel preacher did not tell them the truth. But if the gospel is preached, and the people fail to heed it, those who reject it will know throughout eternity, that they have no excuse for their miserable condition. (Cf. Acts 24: 24-27.)

It is fair to assume, from this section of the lesson text, that there were rich people in the church in Ephesus, and that they needed to be taught, or at least reminded, of the attitude which they should manifest toward their riches. The New Testament does not teach that it is wrong for a child of God to have material wealth; but it does teach that such Christians must be governed by the principles of the word of God in the use of their riches. Wealth must always be regarded by Christians, not as master or an end in and of itself, but as a servant—something to be used for the glory of God and the highest good of society, and especially the household of the faith. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10; Luke 16: 1-31.) It is an easy thing for those of great wealth to feel secure in their riches; but Jesus teaches that it is utterly impossible for one to trust in God, and in riches, at the same time. (See Matt. 6: 19-24.) Furthermore, it is a well known fact, that devotion to any object or cause, will leave an indelible mark upon the character of the devotee. And if the treasure of the person is subject to deterioration, the heart which is in it will likewise be subject to the same fate.

The Bible plainly teaches that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1: 17), and Jesus makes the solemn promise, that if his people seek first the kingdom God and his righteousness, they then may depend upon their heavenly Father for the material blessings, which are needed to sustain

their lives. (Matt. 6: 33.) It is God's will therefore, that his people put their trust in him, rather than on the uncertainty of riches; for no one can be sure that his riches, however secure he may think them to be, are going to continue with him. (Cf. Prov. 23: 5; Luke 12: 16-21.) God does not give us earthly blessings, simply for possession and as a source of pride; but that we may enjoy and use them according to his will.

This section of the lesson text, therefore, sets forth God's plan for the right use of riches, so far as his people are concerned. (Cf. Gal. 6: 10; Eph. 4: 28.) The marginal reading for "willing to communicate" is *ready to sympathize*; and when those who have the means to do with, follow this rule, they are making for themselves "friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles." (Luke 16: 9.) This is what Paul means, when he says that such people are "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed." (See Matt. 6: 19-21.) Both Christ and Paul emphasize the fact, that Christians must keep first in their minds, the things that are of supreme importance; and inasmuch as they are children of eternity, rather than of time, it is the height of folly for them to devote their strength and lives to the gathering of treasures, which cannot be converted into the currency of the country to which they are going. One way to lay hold on eternal life, that is, the real life, is to use aright that which we have in our possession.

#### A Final Plea to Timothy for Faithfulness

(1 Tim. 6: 20, 21)

O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you.

The truth of the gospel was that which had been committed to Timothy, including that which is contained in the letter now under con-

sideration. This was, and is, a noble heritage, and he, as well as we, was, and are, under obligation to guard this trust with all diligence. This is to say all those who are under this responsibility, must see to it that no changes are made in it, that it is properly used, and passed on to others as it was originally delivered. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2.) If any child of God fails in this, he will be depriving others of a possession, which is absolutely essential to eternal life. This is a lesson which every gospel preacher, and teacher of the word, should always keep before him. This responsibility is the same as that which is expressed by Jude in these words: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3.)

The gospel message was duly proclaimed by the Lord's chosen messengers; and it will never be changed, except by false teachers: and that perverted gospel cannot save the soul of a single individual. (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.) Anything which is different from the teaching of the New Testament, is "knowledge which is falsely so called"; and un-

less men of faith and integrity see to it that the message of truth is kept intact, no one can be certain that he is doing that which the Lord commands. There was never a greater responsibility given to any man, than that of guarding the truth. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.)

The form of benediction with which Paul closed his first letter to Timothy, is used also by him in Col. 4: 18. The original word for "you," in the text now before us, is plural; but that, according to Greek scholars, is not sufficient to prove that the epistle, as a whole, was intended for the entire church in Ephesus. Moulton says that "the study of papyri letters will show that the singular and the plural alternated in the same document with apparently no distinction of meaning." The Interpreter's Bible thinks that the use of the plural, in the case now under consideration, may have been intended to show that "Timothy," the individual to whom the letter was addressed, is made to stand for the younger ministry, and through it, for the entire church. At any rate, all young ministers of the gospel, and the older ones too, as for that matter, can take the lesson to themselves.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Under what circumstances, apparently, did Paul write his charge to Timothy?  
What was the relationship between Paul and Timothy?  
Why was a letter from Paul to Timothy, at this time, in order? What is its value to us?  
What are some of the principal historical facts regarding the church in Ephesus?

### The Golden Text

Discuss the context of the words of the golden text.  
What appears to have been the aim of the apostle in bringing these things to Timothy's attention?  
Why should any one want to regard Christianity as a way of material gain?

### Paul's Stirring Appeal to Timothy

What idea should we get from the expression "man of God"?  
From what "things" did Paul exhort Timothy to flee?  
What principal effect does a preacher's love for money generally have on others?

What instruction did Paul give Timothy, when he urged him to flee from evil things?

Why do many professed Christian bypass Jerusalem, as they endeavor to flee from Rome?

What traits of character did Paul exhort Timothy to seek after? What is the meaning of each?

What use of the definite article is made in verse 12 and its significance?

What two aspects of eternal life are set forth in the New Testament and how should we regard them?

What was the good confession which Timothy made and the New Testament teaching regarding it?

What will be impressed upon every one when Jesus comes again?

### The Responsibility of the Rich

What charge did Paul give Timothy regarding the rich?

What great responsibility is implied in this teaching regarding elders and preachers?

Why was this so important?

How should the Lord's people feel about all of their material blessings?

What great promise does Jesus make in this connection?

When and under what circumstance can

the Lord's people depend upon him for material aid?

In what way can the rich, and others as for that matter, lay hold on eternal life?

What is the greatest "wealth" which any person can accumulate?

#### A Final Plea to Timothy for Faithfulness

What great thing had been committed to Timothy?

What obligation do gospel preachers and

teachers of the word have in this respect?

How alone, can the truth of the gospel be changed and what of those who change it?

What is the knowledge which is falsely so called?

What relevance do the facts of the charge to Timothy have for our day?

In what way did Paul close his first letter to his son Timothy?

## Lesson VIII—August 23, 1970

# A SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY

## Lesson Text

### 2 Tim. 1: 1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Je'-sus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Je'-sus,

2 To Tim'-o-thy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Je'-sus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day

4 Longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lo'-is, and thy mother Eu-ni-ce; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.

6 For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.

8 Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his

prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God;

9 Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Je'-sus before times eternal,

10 But hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Je'-sus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

11 Whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher.

12 For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day.

13 Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Je'-sus.

14 That good thing which was committed unto *thee* guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For *I have no man likeminded.*" (Phil. 2: 20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 1: 15-18.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 17. M.....	Our Work and Labor Not Forgotten (Heb. 6: 10-20)
August 18. T.....	Faithfulness Rewarded (Rev. 22: 7-14)
August 19. W.....	Hope for the Future (1 Thess. 4: 1-13)
August 20. T.....	Victory Assured (1 Cor. 15: 51-58)
August 21. F.....	Relief in Suffering (Heb. 12: 3-13)
August 22. S.....	Strength in the Face of Danger (Eph. 6: 10-18)
August 23. S.....	Protection in Danger (Phil. 4: 1-7)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

The epistle which we know as Second Timothy is the last letter which came from the pen of the great apostle Paul, that is, so far as anyone knows; and one has only to read the two letters together, that is First and Second Timothy, in order to see that the latter one is more personal, than was the former. When Paul wrote Second Timothy, he felt that his earthly life was practically over; but he had the grateful assurance that he had been faithful to the trust which had been committed to him. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) The apostle was in his second Roman imprisonment, when he wrote the letter which we are now considering; and Timothy, apparently, was in far away Ephesus. Paul felt that it was essential that he see Timothy, before he went to be with Jesus; and it is quite possible that he sent Tychicus to relieve Timothy, so that the latter could feel freer to make the long journey to Rome. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 12.) But in case Timothy should fail to reach him, before Paul was compelled to leave his mortal body, he sent this letter to his son in the gospel, both to strengthen and equip the latter, and urge him to come to Rome as soon as possible, (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 9, 21.) Timothy was probably sensitive by nature, and timid; and Paul felt that he would need all the encouragement the latter could bestow upon him, especially since the younger man would have to face the problems which beset the church, problems which threatened the very essence of Christianity, without the help and counsel of his father in the gospel. Conybeare and Howson, in commenting on the contents of Second Timothy, note that "no summary of its contents can give any notion of the pathetic tenderness and deep solemnity of this epistle."

We learn from Tit. 3: 12, that Paul had planned to spend the winter in Nicopolis, apparently the Nicopolis in Epirus, on the western seacoast of ancient Greece. It is not

definitely known whether or not he ever reached that city. Some students of the life of Paul think that he may have been arrested in Troas, in the house of Carpus where, in the hurry of departure, he left his cloak, books, and parchments, mentioned in 2 Tim. 4: 13. Many other students, however, are of the opinion that Paul did reach Nicopolis, and probably was arrested there during midwinter. No one knows what the specific charges against him were; but it is almost certain that he was "regarded as an offender against the law which prohibited the propagation of a new and illicit religion (*religio nova et illicita*) among the citizens of Rome."

Paul's purpose in writing Second Timothy has been admirably summed up, or so it seems, by Lock, in Hastings *Dictionary of the Bible*, in the following words: "But Timothy was of a timid nature, and the journey was one which would imply peril, and possibly he may arrive too late to see St. Paul, or may have to face death himself; so he exhorts him to have courage and to provide others who will be able to teach the truth, and warns him against the special dangers which are likely to beset his teaching. The interest of the epistle oscillates between St. Paul's desire for sympathy and his wish to strengthen Timothy's hands and to guard the deposit of the truth." But when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, he not only was chained in prison; he was also treated as a malefactor. (2 Tim. 2: 9.) It appears from 2 Tim. 4: 16, 17, that Paul had to submit to a preliminary investigation, after which he was evidently sent back to his prison cell. It seems that no Christian ventured to stand by the aged apostle, during this first trial, so perilous was it to show any public sympathy for him; but when the final stage of his trial was approaching, Paul looked forward to death as his certain sentence. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 6.)

## The Golden Text

"For I have no man likeminded." The words just quoted are found in Paul's letter to his beloved Philippians; and it will be helpful in getting

their setting, if one will read the immediate context, in which they are found. (See Phil. 2; 19-24.) There are doctrinal and practical is-

sues discussed in the letter just referred to; for Paul's first consideration was their spiritual welfare. But there are also many personal references in the epistle, the majority of which have to do with Epaphroditus and Timothy, loved alike by both Paul and the Philippian brethren. Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome by the church with a gift for Paul, and probably to do what he could in ministering to the imprisoned apostle; and in the discharge of those duties, Epaphroditus became violently ill. This greatly distressed Paul, and he made arrangements for the Philippian messenger to return home, but apparently felt that a letter, containing an explanation for the action, should be sent to the home church.

It appears that Paul's first thoughts, after informing the Philippian brethren regarding Epaphroditus, was for the welfare of the church itself. He was anxious to know how the Christians in Philippi would react to his letter which he was sending to them. He could not himself go to them; but he could do the next best thing; he could send a mutually trusted friend in his stead. That friend was Timothy, and here are the apostle's words concerning him: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all

seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly." (Phil. 2: 19-24.) Although Timothy was ideally fitted to make the trip for Paul, it appears also true that he was the only man who was with Paul at the time, whom he could trust with the mission.

How often have we seen this same principle at work in our day. Some one needs to be visited and encouraged in the work of the Lord; but the ones who are approached for such an undertaking have something, of a selfish nature, which they had rather do, than to minister to the spiritual needs of those who might benefit from their services. This is seen in an impressive manner, when some interested person would like to go himself, but being unable, he calls on someone else to go in his stead. It is a wonderful thing for good people to have confidence enough in us to call on us to act; but we should also think of the good which we might have the opportunity of doing. (Cf. Matt. 7: 12.) We can get a great lesson from the character and attitude of Timothy, if we are only willing to consider them.

## The Text Explained

### The Salutation

(2 Tim. 1: 1, 2)

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ our Lord.*

Interested Bible students will want to note the difference in the wording of the salutations, in the two letters to Timothy. In the first epistle, Paul says that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus "according to the commandment of God our Saviour"; while in the second letter, he says that he was "an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God." This, of course, makes it

plain that the "commandment" of God is the "will" of God. In the first salutation, "and Christ Jesus our hope"; while in the second, "according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus." Our "hope" is based on the *promise* of the life which is in Christ Jesus. Christianity therefore is not a shallow optimism, but involves a well-grounded hope that is based on the truth, which God has revealed in Christ Jesus. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he said, "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood."

(Gal. 1: 15, 16.) It was according to the sovereign will of God therefore, and not in any sense according to the will of men, that Paul became an apostle of Christ Jesus. (Cf. Acts 22: 14, 15; 26: 16-18; Gal. 1: 11, 12.)

The "life" which is in Christ Jesus is, of course, eternal life; and that should always be the concern of the child of God. It cannot be emphasized too often, that there are two aspects of eternal life revealed in the New Testament, namely, its quality, and its duration. We must possess the quality of eternal life, here and now, if we expect to realize its duration in the world to come. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5: 10-13; cf. 3: 14; Col. 3: 1-4.) The life which is in Christ is eternal; and inasmuch as he *is* our life, we have eternal life, that is in quality, as we live the Christian life. This should be a great motive, as we endeavor to live for Christ; for if we realize the value of our possession, we certainly should make every effort to save it in the world to come. People can lose such a life, as long as they are in the flesh; but once they are on the other side, it will be theirs for ever.

### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

(2 Tim. 1: 3-7)

*I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also. For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the*

*gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.*

Paul's reference to his forefathers implies, that his God-fearing life was the result of the example and training, which they set before, and gave him. Goodspeed renders the passage in these words: "I thank God, whom I, like my forefathers, worship with a clear conscience." It was for this reason that Paul could truthfully say, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" (Acts 23: 1); and, "Herein I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always" (Acts 24: 16). This was true, because Paul always did that which he believed was right. He was terribly wrong at times; but he never failed to change his course, immediately and completely, when he saw that he was wrong. (Cf. his action, when Christ met him on the Damascus road.)

It was characteristic of Paul to pray for his brethren (cf. Rom. 1: 8-10; Eph. 1: 15, 16; Phil. 1: 3-11; 1 Thess. 1: 2, 3; Phile. 4-6); and it is interesting to observe that in each of the cases cited, including the one now under consideration, that direct mention is made of the faith of those for whom the prayers were offered, except that of the Philippians, and it is implied there. The close attachment which Paul and Timothy had for each other, along with the devotion which the latter demonstrated for the cause of Christ, would naturally lead Paul to manifest an unusual interest in his son in the gospel. It was pointed out earlier in these studies, that Timothy apparently was naturally timid; and when Paul recalled the tears which he had seen his child in the faith shed, he could not help but remember him before the throne of grace. Those tears had touched Paul deeply, and had increased the tender feeling, which he had for him; and he continuously longed to see him, for he knew that such an experience would fill him with joy.

But it was evidently Timothy's faith which counted most with Paul, that is, the faith which made Timothy the kind of man that he was. It



should be noted, however, that the faith which was Timothy's did not come by chance; it was deep-rooted, and it owed much of its stability to his maternal training and example. In the language of the New English Bible. "I am reminded of the sincerity of your faith, a faith which was alive in Lois your grandmother and Eunice your mother before you, and which, I am confident, lives in you also." Such a faith can come to one, only as the result of diligent teaching and steadfast devotion to the truth. "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3: 14, 15 ) The things which Timothy had learned, as indicated here, were the things which had been taught him, by his mother, his grandmother, and his father in the gospel.

We are not specifically told what the gift of God was, which Timothy had, and which he was exhorted to stir up; but when the passage, now before us, is lead in the light of other references to Timothy's work, the probability is that Paul very likely had in mind Timothy's being set apart to the work of an evangelist. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 18; 4: 14.) It was the voice of prophecy which led the way to Timothy, that is, which pointed him out as a person suitable for the work of an evangelist; and that prophetic voice may have been the voice of Silas. (See Acts 15: 32, 40; 16: 1-3.) And it was probably true, that when Timothy was selected for the work just referred to, that Paul and the elders laid their hands upon him, which was the practice of the early church. (Cf. Acts 13: 3; 6: 6.) If Timothy was given some miraculous power, it was, of course, limited to the age of miracles. (Cf. 1 Cor. 13: 8; Eph. 4: 11-13.) It should be observed that God bestows the gift, but human effort is required to keep it alive.

The responsibility of Timothy was great, and his assignment, tremendous; and it was no doubt for those reasons, that Paul gave him the encouragement, which is implied in verse 7, namely, "For God gave us

not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline." The term "fearfulness" has the same meaning as that of *cowardice*. (See Rev. 21: 8: cf. Luke 12: 4, 5.) Thus, Timothy must not, under any circumstance, fail to declare the whole counsel of God. (See 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) This encouragement would be especially appropriate, in view of the fact that he would not long have Paul, with him in person, to guide him through difficult situations. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 3, 4.) The "power" referred to here, according to Vincent, does not mean power to work miracles, but rather to the ability to overcome obstacles (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13); and verse 8 of the lesson text seems to confirm this idea. "Love" is the quality which never allows one to lose sight of the goal, toward which he is working, namely, the glory of God and the salvation of souls. "Discipline," as used here, means self-control, or, as practically applied, a man of prudence and discretion. And so, if Timothy would not be afraid, but would remember that God supplies the power to overcome, the love to motivate, and the incentive to a successful ministry, he would be the kind of evangelist, which will glorify God, and be a blessing to his fellow men.

#### An Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Discharge of His Duties

(2 Tim. 1: 8-14)

*Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher. For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed: for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love*

*which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee guard through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.*

The term "therefore" connects the statement which has just been quoted, with the preceding section of the lesson text; and showed Timothy what was expected of him, as a result of his having received from God the spirit of power, love, and discipline. The apostle Paul was a prisoner, at the time he wrote this letter to Timothy; and the gospel which he preached was held in disrepute by many. Some of the brethren were not able to overcome this great obstacle, and, as a result, they had deserted Paul (cf. 2 Tim. 4: 16-18); and he was very anxious that that would not happen to Timothy. The apostle, accordingly, called upon his beloved son in the faith to suffer hardship with the gospel, according to the power which God had given to him for that purpose. To suffer hardship with the gospel means to suffer persecution for its sake. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 3, 9; 4: 5.)

The motive for all of this is stated in verse 9, namely, "who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal." (Cf. Tit. 3: 5.) This is a lesson which we all need today; for there is no substitute for the gospel of Christ. It needs to be proclaimed faithfully in every age of the world.

We should also notice the manner in which Paul speaks of the eternal purpose of God, and the way in which that purpose was accomplished. There is a contrast between the *preparation* to bring us the great blessings, mentioned in verse 9, and the *actual accomplishment* of our salvation, as the result of the coming of Christ. "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for

his own possession, zealous of good works." (Tit. 2: 11-14.)

Christ abolished death for his people, in the sense that he removed the sting from it, and made it of non-effect, so far as their eternal destiny is concerned. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 54-58; Heb. 2: 14, 15.) The complete and final abolition of death will take place, when Christ comes again, at the end of the world. (See Rev. 20: 14; cf. 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) And along with the abolition of death, Christ brought to light, that is, made clear to all (Thayer), the doctrine of life and immortality, by means of the gospel. It would be extremely difficult for any gospel preacher, or any Christian, as for that matter, to become faithless, so long as he keeps before him the motives to faithfulness, which are set forth in verses 8-10, of the lesson text now before us. Paul's example of faithfulness to his commission (verse 11; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 7), is also an inspiration to those who want to follow the teaching of Christ.

It is a fact, capable of being demonstrated, that Paul never asked others to do that which he was unwilling to do. He asked Timothy to suffer for the gospel's sake; and the apostle's own suffering for Christ, is a classic example of his own attitude in this respect. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11: 23-28; 12: 7-10.) It was indeed a great day for Paul, when he could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.) Paul was not ashamed of the testimony of Christ, under any and all conditions (cf. Rom. 1: 16); and that was the way he wanted Timothy to feel. The same, of course, goes for all of us.

Paul knew what he was talking about; for he had put the matter to the test. Faith in religion, is something like an experiment in science. It is not the thoughtless swallowing of dogma, but the reverent testing of a profession. It is the proving of that which God has spoken. (Cf. Mal. 3: 10.) The ultimate ground of Christian certainty, therefore, lies in

the fact of Christian experience. Every thoughtful person knows something of the value and authority of experience in other fields; and why shouldn't the Lord's people come to realize its importance in the Christian life? There is, in fact, no certainty so absolute? as that which comes through experience. Paul committed his all to the Lord, and he had learned by experience that

the Lord can **be** relied upon, to guard that which is placed within his keeping. This, indeed, was, and is, a powerful motive for the Christian teacher, and all others, to hold the pattern of sound words, in faith and love; and to guard whatever has been committed to them "through the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." (Cf. 1 Cor. 6: 19, 20.)

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

How does the letter we are now studying compare with Paul's first letter to Timothy?

Why did Paul write his second epistle to Timothy?

Under what conditions was it written?

What makes Second Timothy such a personal letter?

Discuss the apostle's feelings as he wrote this epistle.

### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What was Paul's over-all purpose in writing his epistle to the Philippians?

Why was he so anxious to have a report from the church in that city?

In what sense was Timothy the only one whom he could send to Philippi to learn of their welfare?

What important lesson is there in this connection for us?

### The Salutation

Discuss the differences between the two epistles of Paul to Timothy.

What is the nature of the life which is in Christ Jesus?

What two aspects of eternal life are revealed in the New Testament?

In what sense does the child of God have eternal life here and now? Give reasons for your answer.

In what way does the knowledge of this truth motivate the Christian?

### Timothy's Fitness for the Ministry

What does Paul's reference to his forefathers imply?

Why could Paul always say truthfully that he had a good conscience toward God and man?

What does the New Testament reveal regarding Paul's habit of praying for others?

Why did he pray especially for Timothy?

What did Paul remember regarding Timothy and how was he affected by it?

What was the most important thing in Timothy's life, so far as Paul was concerned?

How did Timothy come to have such a strong and abiding faith?

Who were Timothy's principal teachers and what lesson is there here for us?

What gift did Paul apparently urge Timothy to stir up and how did he come to have it?

Why did Timothy need the encouragement which Paul extended to him?

What spirit does God give his people and how does it work in their lives?

Discuss each of the terms which Paul uses to describe that spirit.

### An Exhortation to Faithfulness in the Discharge of His Duties

What is the purpose of the term "therefore" in verse 8?

How did the brethren, generally speaking, feel toward Paul and why?

What did Paul do in order to keep Timothy from manifesting that attitude?

Why is it essential for the faithful teacher of the word to suffer hardship for the gospel?

What motive does the Lord give to his people to induce them to faithfulness?

In what sense did Christ abolish death?

Discuss the manner in which Paul's example helped to re-enforce his teaching.

Why was Paul so confident of his relationship with Christ?

## Lesson IX—August 30, 1970

## "A SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS"

## Lesson Text

2 Tim. 2: 1-13

1 Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Je'-sus.

2 And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Je'-sus.

4 No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.

5 And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully.

6 The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits.

7 Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.

8 Remember Je'-sus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel;

9 Wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Je'-sus with eternal glory.

11 Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him:

12 If we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The Lord knoweth them that are his."* (2 Tim. 2: 19.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 2: 14-26.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 24.	M.....	The Fight of Faith (1 Tim. 6: 11-16)
August 25.	T.....	The Christian Armor (Eph. 6: 10-20)
August 26.	W.....	Watchfulness Necessary (1 Thess. 5: 4-11)
August 27.	T.....	Deliverance from Evil Men (2 Thess. 3: 1-12)
August 28.	F.....	Strength from the Lord (2 Tim. 4: 16-22)
August 29.	S.....	Success Assured (Heb. 13: 5-21)
August 30.	S.....	Faithfulness to the End (1 Pet. 5: 5-11)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## 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, as we grow older, that we are surrounded by many strange and hidden alien forces, and are harassed by numberless unseen foes. It also becomes increasingly apparent, as the days continue to pass by, that the greater our effort to live a life which is pleasing to God (cf. 2 Cor. 5: 9), the greater is our danger of being assaulted by the evil one. The apostle Paul says, "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ

Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12); while Peter notes, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened to you: but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy. If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a

meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name. For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." (1 Pet. 4:12-19.)

That which has just been said regarding the attitude and conduct of the evil one toward the people of God is true, because Christ and the sinful world are diametrically opposed to each other. There is a life-and-death struggle in progress between them, with issues involved so far-reaching, and the conflict so universal, as to make utterly impossible the exemption of any responsible human being from the contest. Every one therefore must take a stand, either for or against the Lord.

### The Golden Text

"The Lord knoweth them that are his." The words just quoted were written by Paul, to his son in the faith, Timothy, as the apostle's mind oscillated between deserters of the cause of Christ, on the one hand, and those who were faithful to him, under all circumstances, on the other. In the verses which immediately precede the words of the golden text, Paul gives an example of how the mishandling of the truth, resulted in the overthrowing of the faith of some; and then, with a strong adversative, he said this: "Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." (2 Tim. 2: 19.)

The term "foundation," which is directly and vitally connected with the words of the golden text, is obviously used in a metaphorical sense; but the word itself, whether used figuratively or literally, means that which underlies or supports something. It is here called the *firm*, that is, strong and immovable, *foundation of God*. It is therefore

Jesus himself, in fact, says, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." (Matt. 12: 30.)

Our lesson for today is concerned with the Christian's side of the conflict; and it is presented to us from the standpoint of Paul's well known and favorite figure, namely, that of the soldier of the cross, or, which is the same thing, the Christian warfare. It is both interesting and profitable for one 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, or the warfare in which every one who has been redeemed by the blood of the cross is engaged. The principal phase of army life is, of course, the conflict itself; but closely related to that are the equipment, training, and attitude of the individual soldier, which are so essential to a successful warfare. It is to these last named phases of the question that we are to direct our attention in this study.

something which belongs to God; and is used to underlie or support a proposition which vitally concerns every faithful follower of Christ. This foundation is placed in contrast with the unsettling influence of the heretics, against whom Paul was warning Timothy. Those unrighteous men had already overthrown the faith of some; but here is something which cannot be overthrown, namely, the firm foundation of God, or, which is the same thing, God's unchanging and unchangeable faithfulness, upon which his people may always depend. (Cf. Rom. 8: 28, 31-39; Heb. 10: 23; 1 Thess. 5: 24; 2 Thess. 3: 3; 1 John 1: 9; 1 Cor. 10: 13.)

The word "seal" is apparently used here in the sense of *inscription*; and its purpose is to indicate something of the character of the foundation upon which it is engraved. (Cf. Rev. 21: 14.) Williams renders the passage in these words: "But God's foundation stands unshaken, with these inscriptions: 'This Lord knows the people who belong to him' and 'Everyone who bears the name of the Lord

must abstain from evil." Thus, it can be seen that the words of the golden text are one of the two inscriptions, which are engraved upon the firm foundation of God; and they imply that the Lord's people, that is, the church exist in the Divine knowledge, and not merely in the intellect of men. (Cf. Nah. 1: 7; Rom. 9: 6; 1 John 2: 19; 2 Cor.

13: 5; Matt. 7: 21-23.) The second inscription is, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." The first inscription pledges the *security* of the believer, while the second guarantees his *purity*; and, as Vincent points out, "the two go together. The purity of the church is indispensable to its security."

## The Text Explained

### The nay to Faithfulness

(2 Tim. 2: 1-3)

*Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

The greater part of chapter 1, of the book we are now considering, was devoted by Paul to exhortations to faithfulness, on the part of Timothy. Timothy had a good background, but that, in and of itself, was not enough; it was essential that the younger minister of the gospel be always on the alert, and diligent in the work which had been assigned to him. It has already been pointed out, that Paul was soon to leave his son in the faith in a sinful world, and in the midst of false teachers; and that made it exceedingly necessary that Timothy take every precaution, regarding his own life and teaching. Paul, at the close of chapter 1, presented a contrast between those who turn away from the faith, and those who are steadfast, not only to the truth, but also to those who proclaim it; and then, with the beginning of chapter 2, the apostle resumed his exhortations to Timothy.

After pointing out that it is possible for good men to fall away from God's favor, Paul called Timothy's attention to the source of the power, which was able to make him strong; and what was true in Timothy's case, is just as true in our situations today. Thus, if we want to become and remain strong, we must be in touch with the power which is sufficient for that purpose. (Cf. Eph. 3: 14-19.) The loyal gospel preacher, as well as the faithful child of God,

lives in the grace which has been provided by Christ, and which is in Christ; and he can remain strong only by abiding in, or, which is the same thing, by continuing in, that grace. The passive "be strengthened" does not imply that we are passive in the reception of influence from without; instead, the very act of receiving implies our cooperation with God. The power which we need is available, but we must keep in touch with it; and if we do, we shall be strong. Or, to state the same thing in another way, if we abide in Christ, then he will abide in and strengthen us. (Cf. Rom. 4: 20; Eph. 6: 10; Phil. 4: 13.)

The "things" which Timothy had received from Paul, were the fundamental truths of the gospel; and the apostle reminded him that they had been received in the presence of many witnesses, who would be ready to confirm that which had been spoken by Paul. Those witnesses, therefore, were not mere spectators; but men who were ready and willing to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel message. And Timothy was urged to commit, that is, deposit in trust, that which he had learned from Paul, to faithful men; so that the teaching of the truth may continue on down through the ages. It is further indicated that this practice of passing the truth on to others would continue, as long as there are faithful men to receive the deposit, and accept the trust. Such a practice will insure the continuity of the ministry of the word; and every faithful gospel preacher today has a part in this noble transaction. Each professed preacher of the gospel, therefore, should continue to ask himself these questions: Am I faithful to my trust? and What kind of gospel am

I committing to others? (Cf. Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Paul's plea that Timothy suffer hardship with him, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, is a touching statement, written by a father to his son in the gospel, whom he was about to leave in a cruel and sinful world. Those who engage in gospel preaching should not be led to think that such an undertaking is a life of ease. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) Paul did not want Timothy to have any illusions regarding the tasks which were before him. The world was wicked, and would grow worse (cf. chapter 3); and even members of the church would not only grow careless and indifferent, but would actually refuse to listen to the truth of the gospel, and would prefer, and demand, fables instead. It was for this reason that Paul, in seeking to impress this lesson upon Timothy, used the metaphor of a soldier on active duty; and he bade his son in the gospel to act the part of a *good* soldier, as he suffered with his father in the faith. One can easily see the force of this lesson, if he will try to visualize, either the father or the son, who refuses to suffer, when the other one is compelled to do so.

#### Practically Illustrated

(2 Tim. 2: 4-7)

*No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. And if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits. Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.*

Those who are familiar with the New Testament records, are aware of the fact that both Jesus and Paul, and others as well, frequently made use of illustrations, in their teaching of the truth. A good illustration, or figure of speech, will often say for us, that which we have tried to say, but have not been able to express it satisfactorily. Such a form of words can gather around it all the vague thoughts and feelings, which we have been unable to express; with the result that they become both plain and effective. Paul uses three such illustrations in this sec-

tion of the lesson text alone, namely, the soldier, the contestant in the games, and the husbandman. It is true that his reference in all three of the figures he uses, is to Timothy, as a gospel preacher; but it is easy to see that the principle involved is also applicable to any child of God.

No one who is serving as a soldier, if he expects to please his commander, will become so involved in other interest of life, as to make it impossible for him to discharge his obligations as a soldier. A man who is on active duty in such a capacity, must be in position to go anywhere, at anytime, and do anything which his commander requires of him. (Cf. Matt. 6: 33.) The key word in the illustration of the soldier is "entangleth," found only in this passage, and in 2 Pet. 2: 20. The term carries with it the idea of inweaving, or becoming involved. Paul's argument here does not prohibit the preacher's engaging in secular callings as a means of a livelihood. The apostle himself made tents for that purpose; but the idea is that one must not become so involved in the affairs of this life, as to make it impossible for him to be faithful to Christ. Some religious teachers have endeavored to make Paul's teaching here justify, if not indeed require, a life of celibacy for preachers; but there is no foundation in fact for such a contention. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 5.)

The well-trained athlete knows that he must conform to the rules of the game, if he is to be declared the winner. Paul, later on in this letter we are now studying, will say, "I have finished *the* course." The article is in the original, thus signifying that the course not only indicates strenuous running, but that the running is over a well-defined and carefully-marked out track. Any Christian, if he is to be faithful to the Lord, must do that which has been ordained for him to do; he must follow the rules. In the words of Grantland Rice:

For when the One Great Scorer comes

To write against your name,

He writes—not that you won or lost—

But how you played the game.

The term "lawfully," in the text now before us, should be carefully

emphasized. It means about the same as "*let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*" (Heb. 12: 1b.) Not just any race, but the one which has been marked out for us. (Cf. Matt. 7: 21-23; Luke 17: 10; James 2: 10.)

The term "laboreth," in the third illustration which Paul used, appears to be the key word. The apostle is saying, to paraphrase his language, "It is the *working* farmer, rather than the one who does not work, who has the first right of enjoying the fruits of his labors." This, of course, was to encourage Timothy, and all of us through him, to continue, that is, persevere, in the work as a minister of the gospel. It is the enduring, patient, self-sacrificing toil, which is rewarded in the everyday affairs of this life; and the same principle must be recognized in the spiritual realm. And so, whether as a soldier, an athlete, or a farmer, it is the patient endurance, governed by the principles involved, which brings the reward. The soldier who avoids foreign entanglements, the athlete who follows the rules of the game, and the farmer who labors in his particular sphere, will receive the reward. And any one who understands these issues will readily see what the principle is, which is involved in loyalty to Christ, both as a gospel preacher and as Christian.

#### The Motive Which Actuated Paul

(2 Tim. 2: 8-13)

*Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel: wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself.*

The apostle Paul, throughout his letter to him, has consistently urged Timothy to follow his, that is, his father in the gospel's example; but he does not want the younger evangelist to lose sight of the One from

whom the facts of the gospel are derived, and about whom they are proclaimed. The two facts which Paul urged Timothy to remember, regarding Jesus Christ, are his incarnation (of the seed of David), and his resurrection. Paul had always preached these facts, along with the cross or death of Christ; and he calls them the gospel.

Earlier in his ministry, the apostle had written these words: "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which ye also received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) Thus, the three mighty facts of Paul's gospel are the incarnation, the atonement, and the resurrection. These facts are the core of the gospel; and if we want to be true to apostolic Christianity, we must begin with these three great and stupendous facts.

It was because of Paul's devotion to these gospel truths, and the Lord whose gospel it is, that he was in prison, at the time he wrote the letter we are now studying, and was being treated as a malefactor; but he hastened to assure Timothy that the word of God itself was not bound. In the words of another, "The word of God is not bound and cannot be bound. It has in it the life of him from whom it comes and shares the eternity of him to whom it must return. As Peter said, it liveth and abideth for ever. It as been the word of creation and the word of revelation; it is the word of condemnation and the word of salvation. Some day it shall become the word of consummation, for Christ the Living Word is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

Isaiah, in the long ago, expressed the matter in this way: "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread



to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55: 10, 11.) Paul speaks of the unfettered word, in his letter to the Philippians, which was written from his first Roman prison. He was bound then, but the word of God was not bound. Just as certain rays and sound waves can pass through solid walls, just so can the word of God penetrate the seemingly impossible. Paul, in the letter just referred to, says, "Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear." (Cf. Phil. 4: 22.)

The Lord's people should never lose sight of the truth regarding the power of God's word. When the angel who was talking with Mary regarding the forthcoming conception and birth of God's Son, he made this remark: "For no word from God shall be void of power." (Luke 1: 37.) The story is told of a man who was imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II, who clearly demonstrated that the word of God cannot be incarcerated. It is said that it became necessary to change this man's guards from time to time, because he so profoundly impressed them with his contagious Christian faith. Those who are acquainted with history are aware of the fact that, from time to time, the word of the Lord has met with resistance, which appeared to be insurmountable; but when those who were speaking the word, and those who were hearing it, or reading it, continued their efforts, the barriers were leveled, and the gospel shattered its bonds, and went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Paul's devotion to the word of the Lord made him willing to suffer gladly for the elect's sake. (See verses 9, 10.) These verses are rendered by Phillips in these words:

"For preaching this I am having to endure being chained in prison as if I were some sort of criminal. But they cannot chain the word of God, and I can endure all these things for the sake of those whom God is calling, so that they, too, may receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, and its complement of glory after the world of time."

From that which has just been said, and other New Testament teaching on the subject, it appears that these elect are not those already members of the body of Christ; but rather those who would later hear and obey the gospel. (Cf.

1 Pet. 2: 9.) Jesus spoke of other sheep which he had, that is, the Gentiles, before they actually become his people. (See John 10: 16.) Luke refers to a similar situation, when he says, "And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18: 9, 10.) That, too, was before the Corinthians actually became Christians. They were potentially the Lord's people; and the same thing is true of thousands of people today.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he said, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2: 13, 14.) It is God's will that all men should be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9), and it is in that sense that he chose them from the beginning; but they are called by, and must obey, the gospel, before they are actually saved in Christ Jesus. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9; 1 Pet. 4: 17.) To be saved in Christ Jesus, is equivalent to obtaining the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The elect, then, were the people in whom Paul was interested, and for whom he was willing to suffer; and if we get the lesson for ourselves, we will see to it that we do not throw a stumbling-block in the way of those who

should become the Lord's people. The assurances and warnings of

verses 11-13, should also be a powerful motive to faithfulness.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What do thoughtful people become aware of as their time here moves forward?  
What great danger is always confronting us and why?  
In what kind of a position does this place the faithful child of God?  
Discuss the attitude and conduct which should always characterize Christians.  
Under what figure does Paul present the Christian life in today's lesson, and what can you say of its appropriateness?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Paul write the words of the golden text?  
What is the relationship between the "firm foundation" and the words of the golden text?  
What is the significance of the words of the golden text?

#### The Way to Faithfulness

Why was "faithfulness" so important to Timothy and how did Paul approach the subject?  
What is the source of the power which makes the Lord's people strong?  
How does the faithful preacher of the gospel go about appropriating this available power?  
What were the "things" which Timothy had received from Paul?  
Why was he told to commit them to others and how could that be accomplished?  
What lesson is there in all of this for us today?

Why was Timothy called upon to suffer hardship with Paul?

Why is the lesson continuously applicable to the Lord's people in all ages of the world?

How, alone, can a preacher of the gospel be a good soldier of Christ Jesus?

#### Practically Illustrated

Why are illustrations so effective in preaching the gospel or teaching the word of the Lord?  
What three figures of speech did Paul use to illustrate this lesson?  
What is meant by not "entangling" one's self in the affairs of this world?  
What is always essential to victory on the part of an athlete?  
What kind of a farmer is always entitled to the fruits of his labor?

#### The Motive Which Actuated Paul

In what way should one Christian endeavor to follow his teacher?  
What two facts regarding Jesus did Paul want Timothy always to remember?  
What constituted the gospel which Paul preached?  
Why was Paul in prison and what did he say regarding the word of God?  
Why can't the word of the Lord be bound?  
Why is the word of God so powerful?  
Who were the "elect" for whom Paul suffered and what motive lay behind his action?  
When does one obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus?  
What further motives did Paul mention which should move us to faithfulness?

## Lesson X—September 6, 1970

# GRIEVOUS TIMES PREDICTED

### Lesson Text

#### 2 Tim. 3: 1-13

1 But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good,

4 Traitors, headstrong, puffed up; lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;

5 Holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.

6 For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly

women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 And even as Jan-nes and Jam'-bres withstood Mó'-ses, so do these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be evident unto all men, as theirs also came to be.

10 But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, patience,

11 Persecutions, sufferings; what

things befell me at An'-ti-och, at I-co'-ni-um, at Lys'-tra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that would live

godly in Christ Je'-sus shall suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."* (2 Tim. 2: 19.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 3: 14-17.

## Daily Bible Readings

August 31.	M.....	Paul's Picture of the Future (2 Tim. 3: 1-9)
September 1.	T.....	Peter's Picture of the Future (2 Pet. 2: 12-22)
September 2.	W.....	Christ's Picture of the Future (Matt. 24: 37-44)
September 3.	T.....	Jude's Picture of the Future (Jude 4-19)
September 4.	F.....	John's Picture of the Future (1 John 2: 18-25)
September 5.	S.....	James' Picture of the Future (James 5: 1-6)
September 6.	S.....	Hope for the Faithful (Heb. 10: 31-39)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

## Introduction

People who are not familiar with the facts contained in the Bible, may be surprised to learn that some of the darkest pages of history, are found in the inspired volume. The recording of these black events was not by accident; but rather by a deliberate and purposeful design, to show the human race the terrible end, which awaits the disobedient and the unfaithful. When people depart from the way of righteousness, or refuse to walk in it in the first place, they do not get better, unless they reconsider their ways, and resolve to make peace with God. The lesson text for today is one of the dark pictures of the New Testament; it is filled with forebodings, and makes us think of the first chapter of Romans. Paul wrote the lesson text for today's consideration under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and he, of course, presents a true picture of that which the future holds for the peoples of the earth. It should be remembered that the apostle warned of a coming apostasy, in his first letter to Timothy; and it is well to keep in mind that it has always been the Lord's plan to present the dark side of the picture, as well as the bright. This is not because he wants evil to come, and corrupt his people; but because he knows what sin will do for people, and he wants them to be warned against its corrupting influence.

The only way to prevent an evil

state of affairs, or to weaken its force if it cannot be entirely prevented, is to teach the word of God faithfully, and urge people to accept it and govern their lives by it. Too many people, even professed Christians, fail to recognize this truth, or are indifferent toward it; and therefore do nothing about it, until the damage has already been done, and then it is usually too late, at least it is too late for many people. The conflict between right and wrong has been in progress since the seduction of Eve in the garden of Eden, and the deliberate sin of Adam; and the only possible way to improve conditions, is to listen to the Lord, instead of the evil one. One has only to look about him, in order to see that a great many churches have been sadly crippled, if not entirely destroyed, so far as the Lord is concerned, simply because people were not taught the word of the Lord, and urged to accept it. When people are familiar with that which the Bible teaches, and have learned to respect the authority of the Lord, it is not so easy for them to be led astray. But when the great work which the Lord has given to his people to accomplish, is neglected, it is not difficult for thoughtful people to see that grievous times are inevitable.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Roman brethren, he set forth something of the history and philosophy

of sin. His words are: "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 corrupt-

ible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them." (Rom. 1: 18-23, 28-32.)

### The Golden Text

"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." The words just quoted are directly connected with the words which serve as the golden text of last week's lesson; and there will therefore be some repetition, as we consider this portion of the lesson for today. Paul's statement to Timothy, in which the words are found, will lead one in the way of righteousness and make him strong, if it is properly regarded. "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them in the sight of the Lord, that they strive not about words, to no profit, to the subverting of them that hear. Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth. But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." (2 Tim. 2: 14-19.)

No one will ever be able to stand, or, keep away from unrighteous-

ness; unless he is on a solid foundation. (Cf. Matt. 7: 24-27.) Any careful reader of the book from which the words of the golden text are taken, can easily see that Paul is dealing with both sides of the issue, that is, with both the righteous and the unrighteous; with both the faithful and the unfaithful. Timothy, on the one hand, is urged to handle the word of truth aright; and then in the verses which immediately precede the passage containing the golden text, Paul gives an example of what the mishandling of the truth will do to the faith of some. And then, with a strong adversative, the apostle gives his affirmation regarding the foundation; or, to express the same thing in another way, Paul tells his son in the gospel, that if one is to be righteous and strong, he must take his stand as directed by the divine injunction.

The foundation about which Paul speaks, is the faithfulness of God; and there are two inscriptions, or "seals," engraved upon it, namely, the two propositions which serve as the golden texts for the last lesson, and this one. The Lord knows those who belong to him; and his exhortation to them is, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. The term "unrighteousness" is defined by Thayer to mean "a deed violating law and justice"; and it includes

every breach of duty, and everything which comes short of the requirements of justice. And, as observed in last week's lesson, the first part of the inscription on God's foundation—"The Lord knoweth them that are his"—pledges the se-

curity of the believer; while the second part—"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness"—guarantees his purity; and it should always be remembered that purity is indispensable to security.

## The Text Explained

### The Shape of Things to Come

(2 Tim. 3: 1-5)

*But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.*

This section of the lesson text is a good example of that which happens to people, who refuse to have God in their knowledge; and any one who will consult an English dictionary, will have little, or no, trouble in understanding that which Paul means to convey to his readers, by the terms which he uses to indicate the wickedness which is due to characterize the current dispensation, which is what Paul means by "the last days." After the gospel was presented in its clearest terms, by inspired writers and teachers, the shadows begin to deepen as the future unfolds itself, and history is recorded. The final recorded words of Paul, Peter, Jude, and John (the gospel record and the epistles), form an impressive prelude to the Book of Revelation. The last book of the New Testament, sometimes referred to as The Apocalypse (*apokalupsis*) which, in the case of the Scriptures, means an unveiling or the revealing of that which God wanted his people to know, is an inspired account of the struggles and triumphs of the church, between the time that John wrote, and the end of the world. Much of that which John recorded as prophecy, is probably history now; for prophecy which has to do with the future, may be described as history written in advance, or, which is the same

thing, recorded before the events alluded to happen.

We have already seen, in this series of studies, that Paul predicted an apostasy in 1 Tim. 4: 1-3. Peter, John, and Jude also wrote of great wickedness, which the church would encounter in the days which lay ahead. "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. 3: 3, 4; cf. Jude 17, 18; 1 John 2: 18, 19.) It is hardly probable that we know to what specific period Paul had in mind, when he said that grievous times would come; but inasmuch as the original word for "times" usually designated a definite season, it is reasonable to suppose that the apostle had something specific in mind. It could mean, of course, and probably does, that such seasons would occur more than once, since, as already pointed out, the "last days" are co-extensive with the Christian dispensation.

If one will only stop and think, it will not be difficult for him to see that selfishness is the basis for practically every sin, which is committed by men. Jesus, in fact, made the denial of self, the first condition of discipleship. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24.) The original words for "let him deny himself" mean, according to Arndt-Gingrich, to act in a wholly selfless manner, or give up his personality.

When people think more of their own welfare, than that of others and the glory of God, it is easy for them to be lovers of money, so that they may have what *they* want, to disregard their parents, and love pleasure, rather than God—these and all

kindred sins which go with such an attitude. Such people may profess to know God; but by their works they deny him. (Cf. Tit. 1: 16.) But people of this description are only professing Christians; there is nothing genuine about them. They hold a form a godliness, but deny its power. Their view of Christianity is purely theoretical and academic; and such an attitude is, for all practical purposes, a disbelief in its regenerating force. It is an outright repudiation of that for which Christ Jesus stands, and authorizes for his people. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12; 1 Tim. 5: 8; Rev. 2: 13.) The people about whom Paul was writing carry their denial of the Lord and his cause into actual practice; and Timothy, and all others who endeavor to follow Christ, was, and are, exhorted to turn away from them, that is, shun or avoid them. This implies that Timothy would live to see some, at least, of the grievous times, about which Paul wrote. The term "also" probably refers back to 2 Tim. 2: 22, 23.

#### False Teachers—Their Methods and Opposition to the Truth (2 Tim. 3: 6-9)

*For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And even as James and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be evident unto all men, as theirs also came to be.*

The false teachers, from whom Paul told Timothy to turn away, did not go about their work openly. Instead, they "wormed" their way into houses (see Arndt-Gingrich, et al) by stealth. Such insidious methods are also referred to in other parts of the New Testament, as, for example: "For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 4; cf. 2 Pet. 2: 1; Gal. 2: 4.) This, unfortunately, is

still the method which is employed by many false teachers today. But it should be obvious to any thoughtful person, that any cause which requires this sort of procedure, is indeed weak; and any teacher who resorts to such methods, either does not understand the spirit of Christ, or does not respect it.

The original term for "silly women" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and it literally means *little women*, but with a derogatory connotation, such as idle or foolish women. (See Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer, and other Greek scholars.) Vincent says that "silly" is expressed by the contemptuous diminutive. (Cf. Vine.) Ramsay thinks that the reference is to "society ladies," and Robertson notes that "it is amazing how gullible some women are with religious charlatans who pose as exponents of 'new thought.'"

Luke, in recording the facts of Paul's experience in Athens, says, parenthetically, that "all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (Acts 17: 21.) This is especially true of people in every age, who have both money and leisure at their disposal. The Interpreter's Bible observes that religious faddists find easy prey among well-to-do women who are dissatisfied with an idle and empty life. The same commentator goes on to say that religion becomes a fad, when we try to use it as a means of getting that which we want, even when it is something good, in and of itself, like peace of mind, happiness, or contentment. True religion, on the other hand, is the giving of ourselves to God, to be used for his purpose; even though such self-giving is both costly and painful to us. (Cf. Matt. 16: 24.)

Women of the character, referred to in the text now under consideration, are easily flattered, and are charmed by the graceful manners of the religious instructors, who are worldly-wise, and who hold a form of godliness, but deny its power. Such women are willing to listen to anything, which has the appearance of religion, or of being beneficial to society in general. These are the kind of people, upon whom teachers

of error can rely. They have wealth, influence, and leisure; and once they have been won over to the cause, they are willing to spend time, effort, and money, in getting this false teaching into the minds and hearts of others.

Furthermore, these "silly women," being overwhelmed by their own sins, are readily tempted to seek the easiest method of relief. The many kinds of "lusts" indicated, not only those belonging to the fleshly nature, but also those which seek for a change in both doctrine and practice, are the principal motives which impel "little people" to run after fashionable teachers and their doctrines. And so, instead of concentrating their minds on the truth, as it is revealed in the New Testament, these "silly women," and others of like nature and purpose, are always endeavoring to learn some novel teaching, which suits their fancy.

People who are characterized by the attitude just indicated, can easily weaken their power of comprehension, to the point where it becomes practically impossible for them to grasp the truth. If any one really desires the truth, he must learn that in its conquest character comes before conduct. The one seeking for the truth must have a genuine desire to know the truth, be in tune with or have a sympathy for it, and possess a heart willing to receive and entertain it. (Cf. John 7: 17.) Vincent points out that "sympathy with the will of God is a condition of understanding it"; while Robertson observes that "there must be moral harmony between man's purpose and God's will. 'If there be no sympathy there can be no understanding' (Westcott)." The *willingness*, in the very nature of the case, must therefore precede the *doing*. When people reject the divine standard, they may continue to learn, but they will never be able to know the truth. Intellectual curiosity, in the absence of a determination to put one's learning into practical use, will benefit no one. (Cf. James 4: 17.)

Jannes and Jambres were apparently two of the magicians, probably the principal ones, among "the wise men and the sorcerers" of Egypt, who opposed the efforts of Moses and Aaron to get Pharaoh to allow

the children of Israel to go into the wilderness, as Jehovah had authorized. (See Ex. 7.) The purpose of those hinderers of the truth was to discredit Moses and Aaron in the presence of the king, by making it appear that they did not have any more power or authority, than the magicians possessed. But all who are familiar with the facts of the inspired history are aware of the fate which came to Pharaoh, and the people of Egypt, as a result of their listening to the falsifiers.

The heretical teachers of Paul's day were following the example of the magicians of Egypt, in their opposition to the truth; and it is extremely unfortunate that that practice did not die with those false teachers; but it did not. Every faithful gospel preacher today has seen the process at work. When the Lord's plan for the salvation of alien sinners is presented, the modern-day "magicians" endeavor to show the people who are under their influence, and who need that salvation, that it is not necessary for them to comply with the Lord's requirement of baptism. "Why," such men are wont to say, "we have preachers who are better educated, than those who are preaching *that*; and they say that it is not essential for one to be baptized, in order to be saved!" (Cf. Mark 16: 15; 15, 16; Gal. 1: 6-9.) Such an attitude as that just presented, indicates an unfortunate state of mind; but any honest person who wants to know the truth, so that he can obey it, can easily see the error of such mishandling of the revealed word of God. (Cf. Matt. 15: 12-14.)

#### Timothy's Knowledge of the Truth Should Ensure His Safety

(2 Tim. 3: 10-13)

*But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Timothy, in contrast with the heretical teachers of the previous sec-

tion of the lesson text, was thoroughly qualified to teach the truth, by training, temperament, and experience; and to continue as a loyal exponent of the Christian religion. Timothy had followed his father in the faith so closely, as to make Paul's entire teaching and experience his own. The original word for "follow" carries with it the idea of following with a mind, to the point of making the teaching and experience of the leader one's own; to follow faithfully, or, which is the same thing, follow as a rule of life. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4: 6.)

The original term, just referred to, occurs in only two other instances in the New Testament, that is, in only two instances, other than 1 Tim. 4: 6 and 2 Tim. 3: 10, namely Mark 16: 17 and Luke 1: 3. The meaning and use of the word illustrates the sympathetic attitude, which one must maintain, if he is to understand the will of the Lord. (Cf. John 7: 17.) Timothy was, apparently, a native of Lystra; and Paul evidently selected the experi-

ences which befell him in that general area—Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, during the first missionary journey. But great as they were, Paul calls Timothy's attention to the fact that God delivered him out of all of those trials and tribulations.

No faithful Christian should be misled by the paradox, which involves the Lord's people and heretical teachers. God and the wicked world are diametrically opposed to each other; and the closer one lives with the Lord, the greater will be the effort on the part of the devil to see to it that the Christian does not live in peace, without being persecuted. The Lord's promise, however, is with his people (cf. 1 Cor. 10: 13; James 1: 2-8); and they can always trust in him for the needed strength to overcome. (See Rom. 8: 31-39; Heb. 4: 14-16.) The original words for "impostors" is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and it means a juggler, swindler, cheat; and, as Robertson notes, "modern impostors know all the tricks of the trade."

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

What is one of the indications that the Bible is the true word of God?  
Why, apparently, does the Lord present the dark side of human experience, along with the brighter aspects?  
How alone can an evil state of affairs be prevented, or weakened?  
What does the Bible do to acquaint people with the history and philosophy of sin?

### The Golden Text

In what way is the golden text for today's lesson related to that of last week's study?  
What is always essential, if one is going to be able to stand?  
What is the foundation upon which the golden text for today is engraved?  
What always happens when the word of truth is mishandled?

### The Shape of Things to Come

What important thing do we learn from this section of the lesson text?  
What does Paul mean by the "last days"?  
Give reasons for your answer.  
In what way do the New Testament writers prepare their readers for the dark events of the Christian dispensation?  
When should the Lord's people expect these wicked things to take place?  
What apparently is at the root of practically every sin? Give reasons for your answer.

What, then, is the first condition of discipleship and why?  
Why do people give way to the terrible sins named in this section of the lesson text?

### False Teacher—Their Methods and Opposition to the Truth

What methods do false teachers often employ in getting their doctrine into the minds of unsuspecting hearers?  
How can any one who professes to follow Christ engage in such practices?  
What does Paul mean by the expression 'silly women'?  
Why are such people so easily influenced by false teachers?  
Why do some people continue to learn but never arrive at the knowledge of the truth?  
What is absolutely essential if one is to know and understand the will of the Lord?  
Who, apparently, were Jannes and Jambres?  
Who are their modern counterparts and how do they go about their work?  
What responsibility does every accountable would-be disciple have in this respect?

### Timothy's Knowledge of the Truth Should Ensure His Safety

What equipment did Timothy have to enable him to overcome the heretical teachers?  
In what way did he receive this fundamental training and experience?  
How does this attitude and conduct illustrate the Lord's statement in John 7: 17?



Why did Paul probably refer to his troubles in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra?  
 What important fact did the apostle make known to Timothy regarding them?

Why should no faithful Christian be misled by the harsh treatment of the Lord's people?  
 What great promise by the Lord can he always rely upon in any trial of life?

## Lesson XI—September 13, 1970

### PAUL'S LAST RECORDED WORDS

#### Lesson Text

2 Tim. 4: 1-8, 16-22

1 I charge *thee* in the sight of God, and of Christ Je'-sus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

2 Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 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;

4 And will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables.

5 But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry.

6 For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me

only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.

16 At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account.

17 But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gen'-tiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. A-men'.

19 Salute Pris'-ca and Aq'-ui-la, and the house of On-e-siph'-o-rus.

20 E-ras'-tus remained at Cor'-inth: but Troph'-i-mus I left at Mile'-tus sick.

21 Give diligence to come before winter. Eu-bu'-lus saluteth thee, and Pü'-dens, and Li'-nus, and Clau'-di-a, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord be with thy spirit. Grace be with you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."* (2 Tim. 4: 7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Tim. 4: 9-15.

#### Daily Bible Readings

September 7.	M.....	Last Words of a Great Apostle (2 Tim. 4: 9-14)
September 8.	T.....	Last Words of a Great Lawgiver (Deut. 33: 1-29)
September 9.	W.....	Last Words of Christ (Matt. 27: 33-46)
September 10.	T.....	Hope for the Future (Phil. 3: 7-16)
September 11.	F.....	The Inheritance Which Awaits (1 Pet. 1: 4-7)
September 12.	S.....	Life through Christ (John 14: 1-15)
September 13.	S.....	Basis of Hope (Phil. 1: 12-26)

TIME.—A.D. 68.

PLACES.—Paul was in Rome; Timothy was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Paul and Timothy.

#### Introduction

Thoughtful people are affected in both heart and mind, when they come to read the last letter of any person, in whom they have a special

interest; for they are keenly aware of the fact that they will never have another such message from him. The apostle Paul wrote more of the epistles of the New Testament, than all of the other writers combined; and if we accept Hebrews as one of his productions, then it is easy to see that he wrote more of the books of the New Testament, than all the other inspired men, who contributed to the New Testament. All faithful Christians are deeply interested in all of Paul's epistles, as indeed they are in all the books of the New Testament; but we are particularly concerned at this time with our interest in his last letter.

Paul's final charge to Timothy, and through him to gospel preachers and faithful teachers, throughout the dispensation (cf. 2 Tim. 2: 2), is as relevant now, as it was the day he penned the inspired injunction. The immortal words of Paul, in which he expressed his final charge to his son in the gospel, are a part of the principal text for today's lesson. They were written, as it were, in the very shadow of eternity; and they cover the following facts regarding Timothy's work, namely, (1) The supreme motive which should actuate him; (2) the principal task which he must perform; (3) the urgency of the obligation which must

always be before him; and (4) the varied demands of the commission, which determine his activities. The apostle's final charge to Timothy, is still a ringing challenge to every dedicated preacher of the gospel.

Paul, of course, wanted Timothy to come to his side; but in case the latter should not reach him, before the apostle went to be with Jesus, Timothy would have, in his letter, a written record, containing the apostolic advice to a younger, and less experienced, preacher, who was being left behind in a wicked world, to face the hardships which were involved in opposing the heretics, and their consequent heresies, which threatened to destroy the very essence of Christianity. Paul, nearer the close of this letter to Timothy, made some statements, as we shall see further on in this study, which indicated that he expected to be in prison in Rome, for some months. This anticipation was probably based on his previous experience in Rome, some five years before. (See Acts 28: 30.) Paul may have felt that there would be another long delay before his trial, which would extend, perhaps, through the coming winter. But, as Conybeare and Howson suppose, the apostle's condemnation and execution "actually took place about midsummer."

## The Golden Text

This portion of our study for today is a part of the principal text; and it will be considered in its proper place.

## The Text Explained

### Final Summary of the Charge to Timothy

(2 Tim. 4: 1-8)

*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.*

The over-all charge which Paul gave to Timothy, is contained in both the letters which were addressed to the younger man. If one, therefore, will read through both epistles, and observe the number of times the word "charge" is found, he will have a much clearer idea of that which is meant by the expression, *Paul's charge to Timothy*. Thus,

that which we have in the portion of the lesson text now before us, is, in reality, the final summary of the over-all charge; and, if the text is properly considered, it will be seen that it would have been impossible for it to have a more solemn and sublime setting. The summary of the charge was given in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge all men. The term "charge" literally means to testify earnestly, warn, adjure. This final summary of the charge follows the warning, which Paul gave in the preceding chapter, regarding the grievous times.

The right of Jesus to be the sole and final judge of the world, at the last day, came directly from God, as may be seen by reading the following passages: "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him." (John 5: 22, 23.) "And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10: 42.) "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; where of he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts 17: 30, 31.) "Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. 5: 9, 10; cf. Matt. 25: 31-46; Rev. 20: 11-15; Eccles. 12: 13, 14.) This divine picture, which is set forth in the Scriptures, should make a solemn impression upon the mind of every responsible person today.

The expression "the living and the dead" means that Christ Jesus will judge those who are living when he comes, as well as those who died before his coming. Peter spoke in the

same vein, when he said, "who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead." (1 Pet. 4: 5.) No accountable person, therefore, will escape that awful day. When Jesus delivered his great discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ (Matt., chapters 24 and 25), he warned his disciples of the final day of reckoning. (See Matt. 24: 45-51.) The Lord then added three illustrations—the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and a picture of the judgment itself. The first parable shows the need of being ready when the Lord comes; the second parable tells how to get ready; while the judgment scene lets us know what to expect when that great day actually arrives. All men, both living and dead, both good and bad, will be there.

Paul's charge to Timothy was also in view of the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes to judge all men at the last day. The reference to his "kingdom" probably was intended to indicate that he would be the reigning king when he comes. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) Jesus was commissioned of God to set up a kingdom, in an effort to bring men back to God, or, which is the same thing, to cause them to submit themselves to his will; and men will, of course, be judged in keeping with their reaction to the Lord's plea to them. The entire Old Testament was designed to lead men to the coming of Christ (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 15); and those who lived during previous dispensations will be judged in keeping with their attitude and conduct toward God's will in those ages.

To "preach the word" means to herald abroad, proclaim, or publish the good news regarding that which God has made known to his people. The *word of God* was the only thing Timothy was authorized to preach; and the same thing is true of any professed Christian preacher or teacher today. This part of the charge should be understood in the light of such passages as 2 Tim. 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." (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4; Gal. 1: 6-9; 2 Tim. 2: 14-19.) There is therefore no need which the word of God cannot supply; and it is for that reason that anything else, which might be preached, is both superfluous and sinful. (Cf. Isa. 55: 10, 11.)

The urgency which should characterize the gospel preacher, is set forth in these words: "Be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." This shows the manner in which every faithful gospel preacher should go about his work. The word "urgent" means to be on hand, to be ready to preach the gospel at all times, that is, in season, or out of season; or, which is the same thing, whether at a convenient time for the hearers, or whether it is inconvenient; or whether the preaching is welcomed by them or not. The preaching must be done, and those who hear it will be judged according to their reaction to it. (Cf. Rom. 2: 16.) To *reprove* is to reprehend severely, to endeavor to convince one of his sin, with a view to correcting it. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5: 20). *Rebuke*, that is, speak seriously; warn, in order to prevent some wrongdoing, or bring such conduct to an end. To *exhort* is to plead with, or appeal to one to do that which he should do; or, to say the same thing in another way, when one has been taught the truth, he should be urged to do it without delay.

"With all longsuffering and teaching" warns the preacher against losing patience, and resorting to harsh speech. People are not usually won to the better life by being rebuked only; there must also be sound and reasonable instruction as well. Vincent quotes Calvin as saying, "Those who are strong only in fervour and sharpness, but are not fortified with solid doctrine, weary themselves in their vigorous efforts, make a great noise, rave, . . . make no headway because they build without foundation." People should be able to understand that which they hear; and they have a right to know why they are being rebuked.

In the expression "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine," the conjunction "for" introduces a reason

for that which has just been said. When people cease to regard the word of God as being the supreme rule for their lives, it is then that they think of a teacher, not as one who is to instruct their minds and offer guidance for their conduct; but as one who should gratify their aesthetic senses, and set before them that which *they* regard as being both pleasing and beautiful. The "sound doctrine" has *healthful teaching*, as the marginal reading; or, which is the same thing, correct doctrine. Vincent points out that the article *the*, used in connection with teaching, plays a prominent part in the "pastoral epistles," and signifies more than teaching in general) it is the doctrine of the gospel.

"Itching ears" are ears which must be scratched or tickled. Such people no longer desire the pure word of God, and they long for that kind of speech which will please them. Substantially the same kind of a situation is set forth in God's message to Israel through Ezekiel. After saying the the people invited each other to come and hear the word of the Lord, but, having heard it, refused to do it, Jehovah said to the prophet, "And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not." (Read Ezek. 33: 30-33.) The term "heap," in the text now before us, is used in the sense of accumulate or multiply.

The ears of those who are not in tune with the heavenly message, will not tolerate teachers who oppose the lusts of the flesh. The ears serve as a passageway, through which the truth reaches the understanding and the heart; but when the understanding and the heart have no desire for the truth, they are not going to listen to it, or be receptive to it. The *ables* were probably traditional supplements to the law of Moses, that is, Jewish allegorical interpretation of the law, along with stories of so-called miracles, and certain pagan philosophies. There are many kinds of extra-biblical teachings, which daily flow from the pulpits of our land today; but they have no saving power whatsoever. (Cf. Rom. 1: 16, 17.)

The word "but," in verse 5, in-

troduces a contrast. Timothy must not be like the unfaithful teachers of the previous verses; he must refuse to preach, so as to please those who turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. To be *sober* is to control oneself, or, to be well-balanced or self-possessed, under all circumstances. A life of godliness always brings opposition from the evil one and his henchmen (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12), and that, in and of itself, will make it necessary for a faithful gospel preacher to suffer hardships. An *evangelist* is one who proclaims the gospel. (Cf. Acts 8: 40; 21: 8.) Timothy's *ministry* was his service in general; or, the duties which had been assigned to him. The idea inherent in *fulfil* may be learned from such passages as Acts 12: 25; 13: 25.

It appears that Paul's purpose in verse 6-8, in this section of the lesson text, was to stimulate Timothy to a life of faithfulness. It will help all of us to note the quiet courage with which the apostle looked death in the face. He had confronted death too often in the past, to be afraid of it now. It should also be noted that the prospect of death did not dull the apostle's interest in the cause of Christ. There is both beauty and force in the metaphors, which Paul used to describe death, namely, (1) *A drink-offering or libation*—I am already being poured out (see marginal note); and (2) *A departure*, or, which is the same thing, a going away, as if on a journey to a desired destination. (Cf. Phil. 1: 23.)

The references to the *fight* and the *course*, are evidently couched in the language of the Olympian games, which Paul frequently employed to illustrate his work, as well as that of others. The definite article *the*, which is used three times in verse 7, should not be overlooked. Paul did not engage in just any fight or run just any course; both *the* fight and *the* course were those which are ordained by the Lord. (Cf. 1 Cor. 9: 24-27; 2 Tim. 2: 5; Acts 20: 24; Heb. 12: 1, 2.) The apostle, in referring to the faith, drops the figure of the games of his day, and speaks of his faithfulness as a steward—he has been true to the trust which had been placed in him. (See 1 Thess. 2: 4; 1 Tim. 1: 12.) Paul had not,

as others had done, made shipwreck of the faith, that is, of the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7; 1 Tim. 1: 19.) Paul had lived a righteous life, and the righteous judge would give him a crown in keeping with that principle, that is, the principle of righteousness. But the apostle hastens to add that the same reward would be bestowed upon all who "have loved his appearing," or, which is the same thing, those who have their hearts set on his return from heaven. (Cf. Heb. 9: 28; 2 Pet. 3: 11, 12.)

### Paul's Abiding Faith in the Lord

(2 Tim. 4: 16-18)

*At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul's experience, as related here, was similar to that of Jesus, referred to in John 16: 32. The "first defence" cannot refer to Paul's trial during his first Roman imprisonment, that is, the one mentioned in Acts 28: 30, 31; for it is clear from his letter to the Philippians, written near the close of his incarceration, that he was not forsaken, in spite of the fact that he may have had less freedom, than he enjoyed when he was first taken to Rome. Those students who deny that Paul was twice imprisoned in Rome, have difficulty in explaining what this first defence was; but those who contend that he was twice imprisoned in Rome, regard his first defence as a kind of preliminary investigation, to which the apostle had to submit, during his second imprisonment, after which he was returned to his prison cell. It appears that no Christian ventured to stand by Paul during this preliminary trial, because it was extremely dangerous for any one to show any sympathy for the aged apostle. This was probably the first time that Timothy had heard of that experience.

And so, the terror of Paul's final

arrest and imprisonment, must have caused many of his friends to desert him. That was exactly what happened to Jesus, when he was taken into custody, as may be seen by reading Mark 14: 43-50. We know that when Paul wrote this last letter to Timothy, he was treated as a malefactor. (Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 9.) It is possible that one article of the accusation against the apostle, was the more serious charge of having influenced the Roman Christians in their supposed act of setting the city on fire, before his last departure from the Roman capital, following his release from his first imprisonment. The "fearful" in Revelations 21: 8, according to Thayer, is a term used to describe "Christians who through cowardice give way under persecution and apostatize." There are many professed Christian today, who turn their backs on the Lord and his people, for reasons which are much less dangerous, than those which Paul's friends faced!

But when men desert, the Lord is always near. Paul had long proclaimed this doctrine; and it proved to be true in his case. (Cf. Phil. 4: 13.) The Gentiles may have been those who were present at his preliminary hearing, and those who would hear of the gospel through those who were present. This is a good commentary on Paul's statement 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." (Cf. Phil. 1: 12-14.) The term "lion" apparently refers to some great danger, probably to death in the arena. Paul's past experience had taught him, that true followers of Christ cannot expect to be spared physical sufferings (cf. 2 Tim. 3: 12); but he had also learned to depend upon the Lord; and it was for that reason that he could, amid desertion, imprisonment, and the prospect of death itself, break forth into a paean of praise: "to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Cf. Acts 16: 25.) The term "Amen" is used in solemn ratification or confirmation—"So be it!" Paul's confidence in the Lord was supreme.

## Salutations and Benedictions

(2 Tim. 4: 19-22)

*Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth: but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. Give diligence to come before winter. Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.*

Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, husband and wife, are referred to six times in the New Testament; and it is interesting to note that in four instances, out of the six, Priscilla is mentioned before Aquila. (Acts 18: 18, 26; Rom. 16: 3; 2 Tim. 4: 19.) The two instances in which Aquila is mentioned first are Acts 18: 2 and 1 Cor. 16: 19. There is no indication as to the orders just referred to; but if one will read the references just cited, he can easily see why the couple had a special place in the affections of Paul. Onesiphorus, or rather his house, is mentioned twice in the letter we are now studying—2 Tim. 1: 16-18 (where his faithfulness is contrasted with the unfaithfulness of Phygelus and Hermogenes) and the passage now under consideration. His "house" may have included him, along with others; or, the expression may imply that he himself was dead. The names of Erastus (cf. Acts 19: 22; Rom. 16: 23) and Trophimus (Acts 20: 4; 21: 29) were probably mentioned, so that Timothy would know of their whereabouts, or why they sent no greetings from Rome, along with the others mentioned. Nothing further is known of the four people who are referred to in verse 21. All of the people who are mentioned in this section of the lesson text, were people who had enriched the apostle's life. Paul's urgent request that Timothy come to him before winter, was evidently made in view of the hazardous travelling conditions, when the winter season had arrived. (Cf. Acts 27: 9ff.)

*The Lord be with thy spirit. Grace be with you.* The pronoun *thy* is singular, and refers to Timothy alone; while *you* is plural, and includes Timothy and those associated with him, in the Ephesian church. (Cf. Tit. 3: 15b.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What feelings are usually created when one reads the final letter of a friend or loved one?

What did Paul's final charge to Timothy include? Give reasons for your answer.

Why is this charge important to us?

Why did Paul write his second letter to Timothy?

### Final Summary of the Charge to Timothy

What, in reality, is contained in this section of the lesson text?

Why will Christ Jesus judge the world at the consummation of all things?

What impression should this fact have on us today?

Who are "the living and the dead" and what does the expression imply?

What impression does the mention of God and Christ make on thoughtful readers?

What, is probably implied in the reference to "his kingdom"?

On what basis will all people be judged?

What does it mean for one to "preach the word"?

What does the word of the Lord include?

What does Paul say regarding the urgency of the obligation of gospel preachers?

What is meant by "in season, out of season"?

What does well-rounded gospel preaching include?

What is implied by the expression "with all longsuffering and teaching"?

Why do many professed Christians refuse to "endure the sound doctrine"?

What is meant by "sound doctrine"? And how do people manifest their objection to it?

What do such people want instead?

What course must Timothy, and others like him, pursue?

What encouragement from his own experience did Paul offer?

### Paul's Abiding Faith in the Lord

What was Paul's "first defence" and why was he left alone?

In what way was Paul's experience like that of our Lord?

What important lesson is there in all of this for people today?

What gracious promise could Paul, and other faithful Christians too, rely on?

From what was the apostle delivered?

How could he rejoice under such trying circumstances?

### Salutations and Benedictions

What are some of the interesting facts in the relations of Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla?

What is known of Onesiphorus and why did he mean so much to Paul.

Why, apparently, were the names of Erastus and Trophimus mentioned?

Why did Paul urge Timothy to come to him before winter?

What is peculiar regarding Paul's final benediction?

## Lesson XII—September 20, 1970

## PAUL'S EPISTLE TO TITUS

### Lesson Text

Tit. 1: 1-4; 2: 1-8

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Je'sus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,

2 In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal;

3 But in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, where-with I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

4 To Ti'tus, my true child after a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Je'sus our Saviour.

1 But speak thou the things which benefit the sound doctrine:

2 That aged men be temperate,

grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience:

3 That aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good;

4 That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 To be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed:

6 The younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded:

7 In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine *showing* uncorruptness, gravity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed having no evil thing to say of us.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority.*” (Tit. 2: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Tit. 2: 9-14.

### Daily Bible Readings

September 14.	M.....	“Live Soberly, Righteously, Godly” (Tit. 2: 11-15)
September 15.	T.....	Living for God (Deut. 30: 15-20)
September 16.	W.....	Living for Others (Matt. 22: 36-40)
September 17.	T.....	Christian Fellowship (1 John 1: 1-10)
September 18.	F.....	Our Obligation to the Poor (1 Tim. 5: 16; James 1: 27)
September 19.	S.....	Obligation to Employers (Phile. 8-17)
September 20.	S.....	Christian Character (Col. 3: 1-17)

TIME.—Probably A.D. 67.

PLACES.—Paul was probably in Ephesus; Titus was in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul and Titus.

### Introduction

William M. Ramsay, one of the great authorities on the life of Paul, and the history of the early church, calls Titus the most enigmatic figure in early Christian history. It is interesting to note that the name of this able, and devoted, companion of Paul, is nowhere found in the Book of Acts. The only New Testament references to him are in Second Corinthians, Galatians, Second Timothy, and the epistle which bears his name; and the only thing that is known regarding his origin, is that he was a Gentile. (Cf. Gal. 2: 3.) His birthplace is unknown, but it may have been Antioch, in Syria; since he seems to have been living there, when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, for the conference of Acts 15.

Ramsay, in commenting on the omission of the name of Titus from the Book of Acts, says, “The only strange fact in reference to Titus, is that he nowhere appears in *Acts*; and that is equally hard to explain on every theory. Clearly he played a considerable part in the early history of the church (as Luke himself did); and, on our hypothesis of Luke’s historical insight and power of selecting and grouping details, the complete omission of Titus must be intentional, just as the silence about Luke is intentional.” The nearest approach to the mention of Luke in the Book of Acts, is found in the famous “we” passages of that account. (See Acts 16: 10-17; 20: 6-15; 27: 1-8, and on through the remaining part of the book.)

A suggestion as to the possible explanation for the omission of the

name of Titus from the Book of Acts, is made by Ramsay in these words: “Perhaps Titus was a relative of Luke; and Eusebius found this statement ... in an old tradition, attached to 2 Cor. 8: 18; 12: 18), where Titus and Luke (the latter not named by Paul, but identified by an early tradition) are associated as envoys to Corinth. Luke, as we may suppose, thought it right to omit his relative’s name, as he did his own name, from his history. There is not sufficient evidence to justify an opinion; but this conjecture brings together an enigmatic expression in Eusebius and a serious difficulty in *Acts*, and finds in each a satisfactory solution of the other.”

The degree of prominence which Titus enjoys in Paul’s letters, especially Second Corinthians, is unique. He is mentioned by name nine times in that epistle, and always with marked affection and distinction. No one can read the passages, which contain the name of Titus, without being impressed with the idea that he was one of the most congenial and useful of all of Paul’s assistants. Something of the strength of character and ability, by which Titus was distinguished, may be learned by considering some of the difficult tasks, which were assigned to him.

(1) *As a peacemaker in Corinth.* The church in Corinth has been described as “the most unmanageable or churches;” and when Titus was sent there with Paul’s “sorrowful letter,” he found the church torn asunder by strife, and alienated from their spiritual father and founder. Something of Paul’s esti-



mate of the success which Titus achieved in this assignment, may be learned by reading 2 Cor. 7: 5-16.

(2) *The collection for the Jerusalem saints.* When Paul needed some one to stir up the Corinthian church, regarding a contribution which they had promised to make for their Jewish brethren in Judaea, he again turned to Titus; and the latter again gladly responded to the call, (see 2 Cor. 8: 16, 17 ) And there is every reason for thinking that when Titus finished his task, Paul could say, "I was not put to shame." (3) *His ministry in Crete.* It appears that Paul and Titus, sometime after the former was released from his Roman imprisonment, did some missionary work on the island of Crete. There is no way to know as to whether or

not this was the first gospel preaching, which was done there. We do know, however, there were representatives from Crete present on the memorable Pentecost of Acts 2 (see verse 11 ); and it possible that some or ail of them were converted, while in Jerusalem, and later returned to their homeland and established the church there. But, be that as it may, it is evident from Paul's letter to Titus, that the churches on the island of Crete were lacking in the proper leadership, and other characteristics which are essential for a vigorous work, such as the Lord is pleased with. It was for these reasons that Paul gave Titus the responsibility of setting in order the things that were wanting, and of appointing elders in every city.

### The Golden Text

*"These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority."*

The words just quoted are from the closing verse of chapter 2, of the letter to Titus; and they should be considered in the light of the entire chapter, since they constitute a kind of summary of the work which Titus was called upon to do. Adam Clarke, in commenting on the chapter as a whole, says, "Few portions of the New Testament excel this chapter. It may well form the creed, system of ethics, and textbook of every Christian preacher. Does any man inquire what is the duty of a gospel minister? Send him to the second chapter of the Epistle to Titus for a complete answer. There he will find what he is to *believe*, what he is to *practice*, and what he is to *preach*. Even his congregation is parcelled out to him. The old and the *young* of both sexes, and those who are in their employment, are considered to be the objects of his ministry; and a plan of teaching, in reference to those different descriptions of society, is laid down before him. He finds here the *doctrine* which he is to preach to them, the *duties* which he is required to inculcate, the *motives* by which his exhortations are to be strengthened, and the *end* which both he and his people should have invariably in view."

If one will read the summary of Paul's charge to Timothy, as found in 2 Tim. 4: 1-5, he will find

striking resemblances between what he said to that evangelist, and that which is contained in the charge which was given to Titus, as set forth in the words of the golden text. The Lord's people must be taught his will, and that is the responsibility which has been given to every man who professes to preach the gospel of Christ. This will include all things which are essential to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1: 3, 4), and when the work of the preacher has been faithfully done, any Christian, preacher or otherwise, will have before him that which is essential for every good work. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) The work of the gospel preacher is intended to teach people that which is essential to salvation: and when we take into consideration what it means to neglect, or set aside, anything which God has ordained for his people (cf. Luke 17: 10; James 2: 10; 4: 17; Heb. 3: 1-3; Matt. 25: 14-30), it is easy to see that the preacher has no choice but to preach the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Robert J. McCracken has pointed out that the four basic 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; and it is not difficult to see that all of this will be done, when the gospel preacher is true to his trust. While his message is applicable to any

child of God, the words of Charles Wesley, in "A Charge to Keep I have," are particularly appropriate to the preacher of the gospel:  
 A charge to keep I have,  
 A God to glorify;  
 A never-dying soul to save,  
 And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,  
 My calling to fulfil—  
 O may it all my pow'rs engage  
 To do my Master's will!  
 Help me to watch and pray,  
 And on thyself rely,  
 Assured if I my trust betray,  
 I shall for ever die.

## The Text Explained

### Paul's Salutation to Titus

(Tit. 1: 1-4)

*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, my true child after a common faith; Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.*

The apostle Paul is noted for his long and complicated sentences; and the entire section of the lesson text, is a good example. The four verses just quoted are expressed in a single, and somewhat intricate, sentence; but it is easy to see that it contains several of the basic words, which are found in the divine-human relationship of Christianity. These words are God, Jesus Christ, Saviour, servant, apostle, faith, elect, knowledge, truth, godliness, hope, eternal life, promise, word, message (proclamation, margin), intrusted (that is entrusted with a responsibility), commandment, grace, peace, child after a common salvation. Each of these words and expressions may be regarded as a window, which opens out on a broad vista; and when they are all taken together, they constitute a picture of the life in Christ, which no one of the world can ever know. (Cf. John 14: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 2: 14.)

It is interesting to observe that this is the only place in Paul's writings, where he refers to himself as "a servant of God." (Cf. Rom. 1: 1; James 1: 1.) The term "servant," as used here, literally means a *bondservant* (see marginal note), and the idea is that Paul regarded himself as being bound to God.

This general designation is followed by the special appellation, "and apostle of Jesus Christ." The whole title apparently was intended to invest Titus with the necessary authority, or backing, which he would need, in order to carry out the commission which Paul was giving to him. Paul's relationship to God and Christ enabled him to speak for them; and that means that it was one and the same thing, as if they had spoken personally to Titus themselves. The word "according" was seemingly used to express the purpose of Paul's apostleship. This part of the lesson text is rendered by Williams in these words: "To stimulate faith in God's chosen people and to lead them on to a full knowledge of religious truth, in the hope of eternal life." The New English Bible puts it this way: "Marked as such by faith and knowledge and hope—the faith of God's chosen people, the knowledge of the truth as our religion has it, and the hope of eternal life."

When Paul wrote of the "hope of eternal life," he was not referring to his own personal hope of such life; but rather that the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which he was commissioned to impart to others, was in *order* that men who accept the truth might have such a hope. The whole system, that is, the Christian system, which the apostle was authorized to preach, was designed for that purpose. Eternal life is a state of well-being, which will continue for ever. Its nature includes both *quality* and *duration*.

The following comment by Hall L. Calhoun should help all of us to realize the seriousness of life here, if we expect to live eternally with God over there. "One thing seems very certain—viz., that we shall carry with us into the hereafter the personalities we develop here. Character is a matter of our own creation

and development. It is what we really are. It cannot be arbitrarily assumed nor gotten rid of. The character that I develop in this life is the one that I shall take with me into the hereafter with which to begin my life there. There is no good reason to suppose that it will be at all different just because I enter another state of being."

The "hope of eternal life" is a cardinal principle of the gospel; and any attempt to reduce Christianity to a way of living in this world, with no horizons which reach beyond the temporal and visible, is to deny the basic faith of the early church, which cherished an immortal hope of a life beyond this one. The passage now under consideration is a declaration of the reality of that hope, "which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began, and has revealed at his own time the Message, with the proclamation of which I was entrusted by the command of God our Saviour." (The Twentieth Century New Testament.)

When it is said that God cannot lie, that is another way of saying that he always speaks the truth. (Cf. Rom. 3: 4; Heb. 6: 18.) Anything which Jehovah speaks, therefore, is true, regardless of the time he spoke it; and it has been, or will be, fulfilled, in its own good time. (Cf. 2 Pet. 3: 8.) Although God's purpose regarding eternal life was formed before the world began, and his promise concerning it was made long ages ago, the full knowledge regarding it was not disclosed until the gospel was proclaimed. Paul, along with the other apostles, was intrusted with the responsibility of preaching this great truth. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18-21; 2 Tim. 1: 8-11.)

The reference to Titus as Paul's true child after a common faith, implies that Titus was converted to Christ by Paul, notwithstanding the fact that we do not know when or where that conversion took place. If it is true, as some Bible students think, that Titus was a native of Antioch of Syria, it could have been that the younger man was led to the Lord by Paul, during the long ministry of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch, as referred to in Acts 11: 19-26. The record plainly states that Greeks also heard the gospel mes-

sage, and that a great number that believed turned unto the Lord. This could very well have included some of the Greeks, among whom Titus could have been numbered. (Cf. Gal. 2: 3.) But regardless of the time and place of Titus' conversion to Christ, Paul had the right and the privilege to refer to him as his son in the faith. The "common faith" is the faith which is common to all Christians, Paul and Titus, of course, included. (Cf. 2 Pet. 1: 1; Jude 3.)

### Paul's Commission to Titus and Its Purpose

(Tit. 2: 1-6)

*But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine: that aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed: the younger men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*

If one will read the preceding chapter of Titus, he will be able to see something of the immoral character of the Cretans, evidently generally speaking; and now, in contrast with that kind of a situation, Paul urges Titus to impress upon those who had accepted Christ, the need for a well-regulated social order within the church—an order which springs from the saving grace of God, as revealed in Christ Jesus. The apostle also showed in chapter 1, how false teaching leads away from God; and now, in the section of the lesson text now before us, he exhorts Titus to speak those things, which become sound doctrine; or, the things which go to make up sound teaching. It is only by this kind of preaching and teaching, that the desired results can be obtained.

The original word for "sound," in the passage now before us, is *hugainō*, from which we have our word hygiene; and, in commenting on the passage now under consideration, The Speaker's Bible says, "The apostle is not describing the teach-

ing which he had given to Timothy and Titus as correct according to some standard, but as healthy and health-giving. It is our word 'hygienic'—the Greek word in English dress. According to St. Paul, 'sound doctrine' is not teaching that has the conventional ring, familiar as the lilt of an old song; it is whatever tends to build up strong men and women, whatever brings a healthy vigor to the limbs, and a buoyant, beautiful life to the soul."

A sinful soul is an unhealthy, diseased soul; and when Paul names the things which bring on such a condition, that is, the things which are contrary to sound doctrine or healthful teaching, he does not, as one might expect, mention heresies; but rather vices, which are manifestations of the state of the heart or soul. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1: 8-11.) Healthy teaching, which is according to the gospel, is sufficient for the purpose of counteracting such sinful practices, and for restoring the soul to a state of spiritual health and vigor. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.) But when people refuse to have God in their knowledge, that is, when they will not accept his teaching, then the only alternative is to go from bad to worse. (Cf. Rom. 1: 28-32; 2 Tim. 3: 1-5; 4: 1-5.)

The apostle Paul, in outlining his commission to Titus, apparently began with the family; for if the family is not what it should be, the church could not be either. Furthermore, the church was something new in the world, especially among the Gentiles; and it was different from the family, which had never come under the influence of the spirit and teaching of Christ. When fathers and mothers recognize and respect their relationship to each other, and to their children; and when children are trained to reverence their parents, and others from among whom their mates may later come, it is then that a society can be developed, which will honor God, and be a blessing to itself and the world about it.

The "aged men" are not the elders of the church, as such; but rather the older men who should be taught to live a life which is both controlled and serious. People of all ages, and in all walks of life, can respect and admire a person of this

kind. The aged women have an obligation, both with reference to their own lives and characters; and toward the young women who may come under their influence. The obligation which grows out of this relationship is, sad to say, painfully ignored in many congregations of the Lord's people. The older women do not take seriously that which Paul told Titus to teach; and the younger women, in many instances, do not regard with favor that which they consider as meddling in their affairs, on the part of their elders.

### Titus' Personal Obligation As a Teacher

(Tit. 2: 7, 8)

*In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.*

If a preacher's work is to be effective, he must practice that which he preaches; for there is nothing more disgusting, than to hear a preacher urge others to do that which he is unwilling to do himself. The context shows that the example which Titus should set, was primarily for the young men; but the same principle, of course, is also true with reference to any and all groups.

The doctrine which the gospel preacher sets forth, should be characterized by certain definite marks, namely, (1) *Uncorruptness*, that is, pure, and unmixed with the philosophies of men. Or, which is the same thing, they should teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. (2) *Gravity*, reverent, dignified, serious. Preachers should seek to make people realize that living the Christian life is a serious business; and one way to do that is to take their own work seriously. (3) *Sound speech, that cannot be condemned*. This kind of speech does not deviate from the truth (see Thayer); it is beyond reproach, and it cannot be condemned by reasonable, fair-minded, and responsible people. Such teaching therefore has a powerful effect, even upon the opposition.

When a preacher of the gospel is sound in doctrine, pure in life, and

upright in attitude, it is extremely difficult for a critic, or fault-finder, to discover anything upon which he can lay hold, and use to discredit the teacher of God's word. The

would-be opponent therefore becomes ashamed, because he cannot find anything to oppose; with the result that no opposition is registered. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What conclusion do students of the New Testament reach regarding Titus and why?

What are the principal facts which are known regarding him?

What possible reason is assigned for his name not being mentioned in the Book of Acts?

In what way did Titus demonstrate his ability as a helper of Paul in the Lord's work?

Where was he at the time Paul addressed his letter to him?

What important work was assigned to him there?

### The Golden Text

What things did Paul have reference to in the exhortation of the golden text?

What is the nature and value of the second chapter of Titus?

Why did Paul give such charges to Titus and Timothy, as contained in his letters to them?

What is the over-all purpose of preaching the gospel?

How should all preachers of the gospel regard the charge which had been committed to them?

### Paul's Salutation to Titus

For what particular trait is Paul noted in his apostolic writing?

What is the principal value of the opening paragraph of his letter to Titus?

What are some of the fundamental terms which he uses in the divine-human relationship?

What does it mean for one to be a servant of God?

What did that relationship, along with his being an apostle of Christ, have to do with his charge to Titus?

Why did Paul speak of the hope of eternal life and what did he mean by the expression?

Why should all people regard this issue seriously?

In what way is the truth of this question made known to the people of the earth?

Why speak of God's being unable to lie?

What did Paul mean by saying that Titus was his true child after a common faith?

### Paul's Commission to Titus and Its Purpose

In what context was this part of the commission to Titus given?

Why, then, was such basic teaching needed?

What does Paul mean by "sound doctrine" and why is this such an important subject?

What, according to Paul, was the cause of the unhealthy condition he was seeking to correct?

What, alone, is the Lord's remedy for such a situation?

What invariably happens when people refuse to permit free course of God's word in their hearts?

Where, apparently, did Paul instruct Titus to begin with his efforts to improve conditions?

What specific teaching was he to do?

How do many people today regard such teaching and why?

### Titus' Personal Obligation As a Teacher

In what way did Paul tell Titus to re-enforce his teaching?

Why is such a course as this so essential?

What traits should always characterize a sound gospel preacher's work?

What will keep the opposition from trying to hinder the work of a gospel preacher?

Why will those who would like to oppose be ashamed?

## Lesson XIII—September 27, 1970

## "MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS"

### Lesson Text

#### Tit. 3: 4-14

4 But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared,

5 Not by works *done* in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 Which he poured out upon us

richly, through Je'-sus Christ our Saviour,

7 That, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

8 Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may

be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men:

9 But shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

10 A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse;

11 Knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Put them in mind . . . to speak evil of no man.” (Tit. 3: 1, 2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Tit. 3: 1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

September 21.	M.....	Kept for Christ (Jude 1-4)
September 22.	T.....	Life in Christ (John 10: 7-18)
September 23.	W.....	Kept by God's Power (1 Pet. 1: 3-10)
September 24.	T.....	God Our Keeper (Psalm 121: 1-8)
September 25.	F.....	New Creation (2 Cor. 5: 11-19)
September 26.	S.....	Help in Temptation (Rev. 3: 7-13)
September 27.	S.....	Work Out Our Salvation (Phil. 2: 1-12)

TIME.—A.D. 67.

PLACES.—Paul was probably in Ephesus; Titus was in Crete.

PERSONS.—Paul and Titus.

Introduction

There is no place for idleness in the Christian life. Christianity is preeminently a religion of faith; and genuine faith always puts the believer to work. This is another way of saying that definite action always flows out of the kind of faith, which the word of the Lord makes possible. The faith which pleases the Lord, comes only by hearing his word; and it is for that reason that people who are acceptable to him, are those who are carefully taught the truth. When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, he said, “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.)

The passage just quoted is sufficient to show that only the taught are in position to engage in every good work; or, to say the same thing in another way, those who are properly taught are the ones who are furnished unto every good work. The term “furnished” (perfect passive participle of *exartizō*) literally

12 When I shall send Ar'-te-mas unto thee, or Tych'-i-cus, give diligence to come unto me to Ni-cop'-olis: for there I have determined to winter.

13 Set forward Ze'-nas the lawyer and A-pol'-los on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

14 And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

means to prepare and equip one for whatever work may be assigned him. The New English Bible renders the passage in these words: “Every inspired scripture has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind.” The same passage is translated by Phillips in this way: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work.”

Too often people endeavor to consider faith and works from the standpoint of their academic or theoretical meaning, rather than to try to point out something of their practical application in everyday living. It will be well, if those who are trying to please the Lord, will make the effort to see what happens to a person, who has genuine faith in the Lord. James, who is noted

for his practical approach to such questions, plainly shows that the faith which pleases God, is more than a mere statement of that to which one is willing to give his mental assent. (See James 2: 14-26.) The faith which is pleasing to God, must be reduced to a way of

life. No ideals, religious or otherwise, have been tenable for long, unless they were reducible to the fabric of living. When men begin to see that faith works, achieves results, and changes people, they will not be long in adopting it as their way of life.

### The Golden Text

*"Put them in mind . . . to speak evil of no man."* Paul wrote the words just quoted in this context: "Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work, to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." While the context appears to indicate that Paul is giving instruction regarding the Christian attitude toward civil governments, and that may be his sole purpose; but no violence is done the Scriptures, if the issue is extended to include total Christian conduct in a non-Christian world. The apostle, in the closing part of chapter 2, makes it plain that Jesus brought the church into existence, and purified "unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Christian people therefore are under obligation to live an exemplary life toward all men. (Cf. 1 Pet. 2: 9.)

When the obligations toward civil governments are considered, we have the teaching of both Jesus and the apostles to guide us. "And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." (Mark 12: 17.) "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 evildoers 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 bondservants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Pet. 2: 13-17.)

"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. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rules are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger of wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." (Rom. 13: 1-7; cf. 1 Tim. 2: 1, 2; Matt. 17: 24-27; 22: 15-22.)

Those who read the New Testament for what it says, will readily recognize the fact that Christianity affects the entire relationship of those who embrace it. It was for this reason that Paul understood that the influence of the church will depend, not only upon the truth of the gospel, and the effective manner in which it is presented to those who should hear it; but also on the lives of the Christians themselves. This is especially true in their relationship with those who are outside the church. The Lord's people are under obligation to put into practice the inspired teaching which they accept and proclaim. A Christian who follows this rule, cannot speak evil of any man, whether connected with the government, or in the ordinary walks of life.

## The Text Explained

### The Way in Which Sinners Are Brought to God

(Tit. 3: 4-7)

*But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

The conjunction "but" emphasizes a striking contrast, in fact, as Hendriksen points out, a double contrast, namely, (1) "man's inhumanity to man" *versus* God's benignity (kindness, cf. Rom. 2: 4; Gal. 5: 22; Eph. 2: 7) and philanthropy (love toward man—*philanthropia*—found elsewhere in the New Testament, only in Acts 28: 2); and (2) the Stygian darkness of our past *versus* the light of God's grace into which the redeemed have been brought. Man, in his sin, was hopelessly lost, until the kindness of God, and his everlasting love for the race, appeared in the person of his Son, and made possible his salvation. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12; 1: 3.) And there was nothing which man did, or could do, that merited this unheard of redemption.

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 stop and take into consideration the usual viewpoints, which have characterized the discussion, and will try to analyze them in the light of the inspired record; it will not be difficult for him to see that the principal causes of disagreement on the subject, is a failure to recognize the fact that the term "works" is used in the New Testament in two different senses. Many people seem to think that *works* in connection with salvation automatically rules out salvation by faith.

But it is doubtful if there would have been any serious question, regarding the place which works have in the gospel plan of salvation, had it not been for the action of Martin Luther, in inserting the word

"only," following the word *faith* in Romans 3: 28. That great reformer's aim, apparently, was to contrast the system of faith, as set forth in the iBook of Romans, with the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by works. But it will have to be admitted that, however pure his motive may have been, his action was extremely unfortunate; for the idea which his daring act introduced into religious thinking, affected the whole complex of the question now before us. This is true, because his action forced, in the view of Luther and many others, a contradiction between Romans 3 and James 2; and left the impression that the Scriptures, without Luther's idea, do not teach justification by faith, which, or course is not true. (See Rom. 5: 1; cf. 4: 1-25.)

When Paul said, "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves," he meant exactly that which he stated in Ephesians 2: 8, 9, 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." Our salvation is the gift of God, or, which is the same thing, "according to," that is, because of or as a result of, "his mercy." Salvation was made possible by "the grace" (the article is in the original), on God's part; and it is received or appropriated by *faith*, on our part. "Not of works" (Eph. 2: 9) is equivalent to "not of yourselves" (Eph. 2: 8) and "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves" (Tit. 3: 5). There was nothing which we did, or could do, which made our salvation possible; we only accepted by faith that which was provided, or made possible, for us, through God's grace and mercy.

The works, then, which we did not do, were clearly *meritorious works*, or works which, in and of themselves, could procure the desired end, that is, our salvation. If we had done something to make our salvation possible, there would have been grounds for glorying or boasting on our part; but, according to Paul, that did not happen, "that no man should glory." (Eph. 2: 9; cf. Rom. 4: 1-5.) There is therefore



a vast difference between *meritorious works*, and "obedience which spring? from faith." Neither Paul, nor any other New Testament writer, ever placed "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1: 5; 16: 26) in contrast with, or in opposition to, *faith*; nor is the obedience of faith ever represented as making faith void, as meritorious works would have done. (Cf. Rom. 4: 14.)

"The washing of regeneration," or the *laver* of regeneration, as given in the marginal reading, is, according to Arndt-Gingrich, "the bath that brings about regeneration." It is the same thing that Jesus meant by "water" in the new birth (John 3: 5); and what Peter means, when he says, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3: 21.) Vincent says, "The phrase *laver of regeneration* distinctly refers to baptism, in connection with which and through which as a medium regeneration is conceived as taking place. (Cf. Rom. 6: 3-5.) It is true that nothing is said of *faith*; but baptism implies faith on the part of its recipient. It has no regenerating effect apart from faith; and the renewing of the Holy Spirit is not bestowed if faith be wanting."

The Holy Spirit is promised to all obedient believers in Christ (see John 7: 37-39; Acts 2: 38, 39; 5: 32; 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13; 6: 19, 20); and the New Testament implies that the Spirit's "renewing" continues through the Christian life. "Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed into knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3: 9, 10.) "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Cor. 4: 16.) The present passive participle of Col. 3: 10 indicates a continuous refreshing of the new man in Christ Jesus: or, as the present indicative passive of 2 Cor. 4: 16 declares, "our inward man is renewed day by day."

When Paul says that the Holy Spirit was "poured out upon us

richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour," he means nothing more than that the Holy Spirit was given to them that obey the gospel. The term "poured" is a figurative expression, and should be understood accordingly. We should keep in mind the fact that the Holy Spirit is personified in the New Testament; and a literal pouring out of a person does not accord with that idea. The expression we are now considering, therefore, literally means that the promise of the Spirit was given to all obedient believers in Christ. (Gal. 3: 14.) The passage just cited reads as follows: "That upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Cf. Acts 3: 25, 26.) The original reads, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through *the* faith," which is equivalent to saying through the gospel. (Cf. Acts 6: 7, where "the faith" equals *the* gospel.)

The word "justified" is used in the sense of having been acquitted, and declared to be righteous, or, which is the same thing, acceptable to God. Paul calls this "imputed" righteousness, in the Roman letter, that is, righteousness which has been ascribed to the obedient believer in Christ. (Read Rom. 4.) Therefore, having begun this new life in Christ, we are "heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Or, to state the same thing in another way, we hope to continue to live in eternity. "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 3.)

#### Paul's Final Charge to Titus

(Tit. 3: 8-11)

*Faithful is the saying, and concerning these things I desire that thou affirm confidently, to the end that they who have believed God may be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men: but shun foolish questions, and generalities, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for these are unprofitable and vain. A factious man after a first, and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned.*

The "saying" which Paul says is faithful, or, trustworthy or reliable,

apparently refers to the doctrinal statement, contained in verses 4-7, and regarded as a single concept. We follow the same practice on many occasions, as, for example, when speaking of the "incarnation," we sum up in one word the whole teaching of the Scriptures on the Word's becoming flesh, and appearing in history as the Lord Jesus Christ. (See *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, *in loco*.) "These things" evidently refer to the various topics which the apostle mentioned in the verses just referred to, that is, the things contained in verses 4-7. It could, of course, without doing violence to the truth involved, have a broader view, and include the practical teaching of the entire epistle.

As Paul nears the close of his letter to Titus, he wants his son in the gospel to do some positive teaching on Christian living; so that those who have believed God, or, which is the same thing, those who are living the Christian life, may be careful to maintain good works. The faith of the child of God, if he is to be a force for good and pleasing to the Lord, must manifest itself in good deeds, rather than in words. The apostle John, toward the close of the first century of the present dispensation, and nearly thirty years after Paul wrote this letter to Titus, said this, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth." (1 John 3: 18.) The marginal reading for "maintain good works," is *profess honest occupations*. The apostle, in an earlier epistle, had said, "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." (Eph. 4: 28; cf. 2 Thess. 3: 6-15.)

It is good and profitable for all concerned, when Christians engage in worthy occupations; but there is more to a successful and effective Christian life, than engaging in honest and honorable work. The Lord's people, and particularly those who preach the gospel, are to avoid certain things which not only hinder growth; but will, if they are allowed to continue, destroy the cause of Christ in any given area. Paul mentions some of these things in

verse 9, namely, "But shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for these are unprofitable and vain." Timothy was also warned against this kind of practice. It is easy for a Bible class to get "bogged down" with questions and issues, which not only benefit no one; but which actually keep people from teaching and learning the truth.

"A factious man" is not one who contends for the truth in the face of opposition; for if that makes a man a heretic, then every reformer and restorer, regardless of the correctness of his views, would be a factious man. A factious man, such as Paul is speaking of, is one who introduces questions and practices, which are clearly out of harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. It is not very difficult to identify a factious man, even aside from his teaching; for his very *attitude* and *disposition* betray him. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11: 16; 1 John 2: 19; 1 Cor. 11: 19.) Paul's full statement regarding a factious man is as follows: "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned."

Paul F. Barackman, in summing up Paul's last charge to Titus, says, "The final word from Paul emphasizes two things: the importance of works worthy of the gospel, and the peril from false teaching. The true teaching of the gospel is positive, constructive, and plain. The present emphasis on action can go too far, if it means substituting action for thought and sound doctrine; but it is right in that we really believe only what we are putting to use in daily life. Faith is not something stored in the mind. It is the power by which we walk and do not faint.

"The preacher must be careful to exhort and rebuke in the spirit of Christ. His sound doctrine must be accompanied by plain truth regarding conduct and character. Even in the epistle to the Ephesians Paul gave half of the letter to Christian walk. Reciting a creed can become a hypocritical form. The trouble with argument and speculation is that men who engage in them often feel they have done something specially religious."

## A Personal Message to Titus

(Tit. 3: 12-14)

*When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, give diligence to come unto me to Nicopolis: for there I have determined to winter. Set forward Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.*

*And let our people also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.*

The principal part of Paul's letter to Titus ends with verse 11, that is, that part which is regarded as doctrinal; but there remained the need for a personal word to Titus, which is supplied in this section of the lesson text. It seems probable, from Titus 3: 13, that the letter was sent to Titus by Zenas the lawyer, and Apollos. Paul was probably in Ephesus, when he wrote the letter; but he was not planning to remain there very long. He would, at the proper time, send Artemas, or Tych-

icus, to Titus, and he, that is, Titus, should be ready to leave Crete upon their arrival, and join the apostle in Nicopolis, where the latter hoped to spend the winter.

The Nicopolis of the text was apparently the Nicopolis, in Epirus, on the western seacoast of ancient Greece. It is not definitely known whether or not Paul ever reached that city, but he probably did. Some students of the life of Paul think that he may have been arrested in Troas, in the house of Carpus; where, in the hurry of departure, he left his cloak, books, and parchments, mentioned in 2 Tim. 4: 13. Many students, however, are of the opinion that Paul did reach Nicopolis and probably was arrested there during midwinter, and taken on to his final imprisonment in Rome, where he wrote his second letter to Timothy, the last of his writings which have come down to us.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Why are true Christians always busy people?

How may they always know what they should do, that is, the kind of activities they should engage in?

Why, then, should the Lord's people always be found studying his will for them?

Why isn't faith alone sufficient for one's life?

### The Golden Text

What appears to have been Paul's purpose in writing the passage containing the golden text?

Why should Christians always manifest a good attitude toward civil government?

What is the divine purpose for the powers that be, that is, civil governments?

What are the total effects of Christianity in the lives of the Lord's people?

### The Way in Which Sinners Are Brought to God

What is the place and purpose of the particle "but" at the beginning of verse 4?

What contrasts are emphasized by it?

What does the New Testament teach regarding "works"?

Why, apparently, are so many people confused regarding works and salvation?

Discuss the New Testament teaching regarding this subject.

When Paul says, "not of works," what kind of works does he have in mind?

What kind of works are essential to salvation?

What is the "washing of regeneration" and its place in the plan of salvation?

What is meant by the "renewing of the Holy Spirit"?

What is the significance of being "justified" and what is the hope of eternal life?

### Paul's Final Charge to Titus

What "saying" does Paul say is faithful and what are "these things" to which he referred?

Why did Paul want Titus to do some plain and positive preaching?

In what way can the Lord's people maintain good works?

What are some of the issues which gospel preachers and other Christians are to avoid?

Why is this lesson so urgently needed today and who is usually responsible for the unwholesome conditions which hinder the Lord's work?

Who is a "factious man" and how should he be dealt with?

What two issues did Paul emphasize in his final charge to Titus?

Why is gospel teaching so urgently needed today?

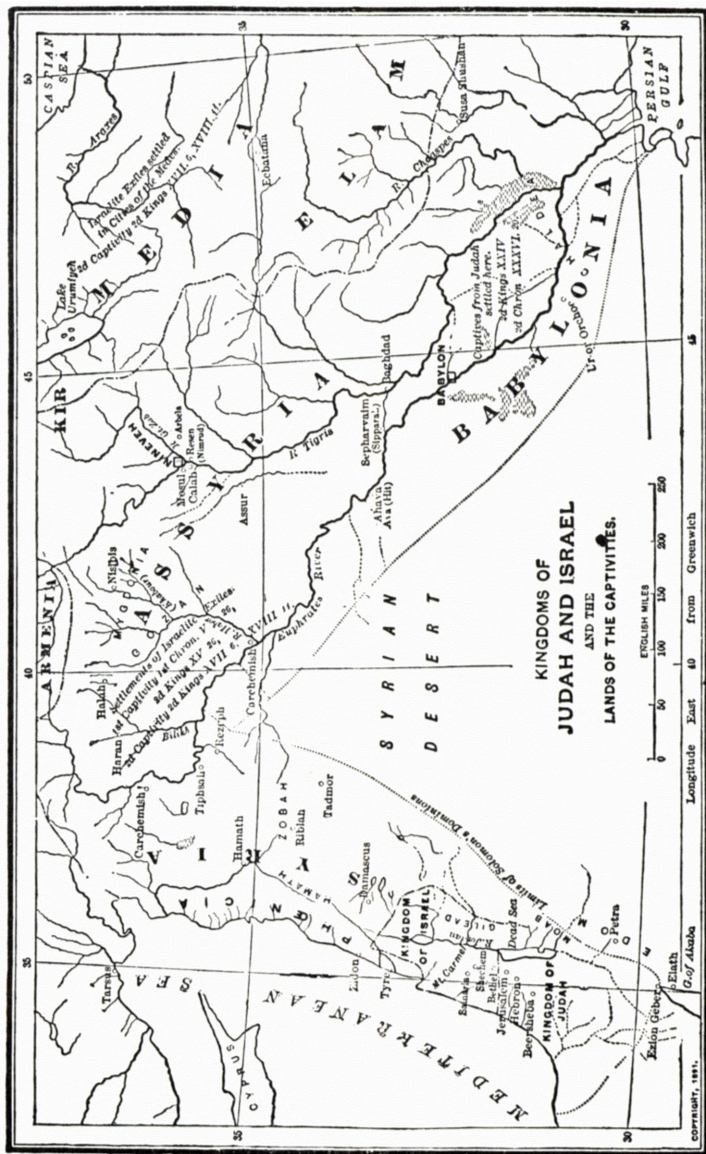
### A Personal Message to Titus

Why was this personal message to Titus essential?

What instruction did Paul give him?

How would Titus know where to meet Paul and when?

What probably are the closing events and movements in the earthly life of Paul?



## FOURTH QUARTER

### HISTORY OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM

*AIM.—To note, in the history of the Southern Kingdom, the over-ruling providence of God in the affairs of men who were often sinful, weak and indifferent, to accomplish the Divine Purpose.*

Lesson I—October 4, 1970

### REHOBO AM'S FOLLY

#### Lesson Text

1 Kings 12: 1-12, 21-24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter?

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

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

12 So Jer-o-bo'-am and all the people came to Re-ho-bo'-am the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day.

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

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

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

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

*GOLDEN TEXT.—“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16: 18.)*

*DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 12: 13-20.*

## Daily Bible Readings

September 28. M.....	A Plea for Justice (1 Kings 12: 1-5)
September 29. T.....	Evil Counsel (1 Kings 12: 6-11)
September 30. W.....	The Kingdom Divides (1 Kings 12: 12-20)
October 1. T.....	Politics and Religion (1 Kings 12: 21-33)
October 2. F.....	Doom Threatened (1 Kings 13: 1-6)
October 3. S.....	Last Acts of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12: 13-16)
October 4. S.....	Blessings of Unity (Psalm 133)

TIME.—975 B.C.

PLACES.—Shechem and Jerusalem.

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

### Introduction

Although Rehoboam's reaction to the situation, in which he was involved at the time of this lesson, was exceedingly foolish, it remains a fact that he himself was not responsible for the state of affairs with which he was surrounded. His father Solomon, the wisest king who ever lived, that is, the wisest purely human king (cf. 1 Kings 3: 4-15; 4: 29-34), was directly responsible for the conditions which prevailed at the time his son came to the throne. This lesson therefore should be carefully considered by all fathers, and especially in view of the effect which their lives may have on their children after them.

But in spite of Solomon's great wisdom, it is easy for the students of his life to see that his personal life was as foolish, as his mind was brilliant. And so, instead of exerting an influence for good upon the world about him, by dedicating himself to the cause of Jehovah, Solomon allowed the world to direct his life. In his efforts to become worldly great, Solomon surrounded himself with influences which, in time, completely destroyed those spiritual qualities, which he earlier possessed. The result was that the morality, which was his during the earlier part of his reign, was corrupted and gradually lost, in the degeneration which followed. The inspired historian expressed the matter in these words:

"And Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him

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

Our study for today should be extremely valuable for parents and church leaders, for they are the ones who are, to a great extent, setting the stage for tomorrow, and determining the kind of work which succeeding generations must do. It often happens that selfish people, parents, church leaders, and others, bent on having their own way, have little, if any, thought concerning what their children will have to suffer. It is the solemn duty of every person, therefore, and especially every Christian, to endeavor to leave the world better than he found it; and this can be done, only by taking the will of God into consideration. When people do right, they are not only pleasing God; but they are also doing what they can to make it possible for their children to have "an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

### The Golden Text

*"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."*

The two clauses of the passage which serves as the golden text for

today's lesson, are a good example of Hebrew poetic parallelism, which is so common in the Old Testament. Both clauses are similarly constructed, and the second reiterates the thought which is expressed by the first. Those who read the passage can see that "pride" and "a haughty spirit," in the two parts of the sentence, are personified; and that they are both certain to leave disaster in their paths. The Hebrew people considered this the middle verse of the Book of Proverbs; and it has been called a fitting keystone to the whole composition.

All pride, in and of itself, is not necessarily evil. No normal human being can maintain the dignity, which should characterize him, without possessing some pride. There is, to be sure, *eating* in gluttony, and *drinking* in drunkenness; but it is not the eating and the drinking, as such, which cause the trouble; it is the excessiveness which accompanies them. Just so with pride. Some one has observed that pride, like laudanum and other poisonous medicines, is beneficial in small quantities; but exceedingly dangerous in large doses. No man who does not have some pride in himself, can be pleasing to others. George Eliot has pointed out that "we mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time;

keep back the tears and look a little pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, 'Oh, nothing!' Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts—not to hurt others."

It is, however, the other side of *pride*, which is emphasized in the golden text; and if we are willing to make the comparison, we can easily see something of the evils of that trait, by carefully considering its bad side. Defoe called pride, in its bad sense, "The first peer and president of hell"; and that appears to have been well spoken. Richard Newton gave what he considered the history of pride in three chapters, namely, (1) its beginning in heaven, (2) its continuance on earth, and (3) its end in hell. This is, of course, the history of the devil, who is the very real father of pride, in the bad sense. The Bible does not say so in so many words, but the inference is that Satan was originally an angel in God's favor; and who, because of his pride was cast out of heaven; and it is for this reason that it is thought that the history of pride, which is the same as a haughty spirit, is the history of the devil. (Cf. 1 Tim. 3: 6.) The following scriptures give some idea of the Lord's attitude toward pride: Isa. 14: 12-15; Ezek. 28: 11-19; 1 Pet. 5: 5-7.

## The Text Explained

### A Request for Social and Economic Relief

(1 Kings 12: 1-5)

*And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it (for he was yet in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt, and they sent and called him), that Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and the heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.*

Rehoboam, so far as the record goes, was the only son of Solomon, although the latter had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, that is, secondary wives, women who were not free, perhaps taken captive in war, or acquired in some manner, other than by free choice. (See 1 Kings 11: 3; cf. Hos. 4: 10.) Solomon, as already noted, was a very wise man; but his son was the very opposite, as may be seen from the record. Adam Clarke calls Rehoboam "a poor, unprincipled fool"; and he goes on to say that if Solomon had kept himself within reasonable bounds in matrimonial affairs, he probably would have had more children; and such as would have had common sense enough to discern the delicacy of their situation, and rule according to

reason and religion. Rehoboam was forty-one years old, when he came to the throne (2 Chron. 12: 13); which was probably twice the age of Solomon, when he became king (1 Kings 3: 7).

Shechem was located in the hill-country of Ephraim (Josh. 20: 7), in the narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The city therefore was not only well within the territory of the dissatisfied tribes of Israel, but was in the boundary of the most dominant tribe of that which became the northern kingdom. The city, in fact, became the capital of Jeroboam, after the division. (See 1 Kings 12: 25.) The term "built," in the passage just cited, is evidently used in the sense of building up or enlarging; so that the city would meet his needs and desires as the seat of his new government. Rehoboam did not go to Shechem, in order to be made king; that status was his right by inheritance; but, by going into the territory of the dissatisfied tribes, and to one of their principal cities, he evidently hoped to get them to accept him as their king.

The tenth and eleventh chapters of 1 Kings, give some idea of the terrible burdens which Solomon placed upon the shoulders of his people; and also why Jeroboam fled from the king's presence, and dwelt in Egypt. Solomon's father David spent a lifetime of sacrifice in building up the kingdom, so that when his son came to the throne, everything was ready for a glorious and prosperous reign; but before Solomon had finished his course, the kingdom was ready to disintegrate.

It should also be noted that the complaints against Solomon, which were made to Rehoboam, were not based on Solomon's idolatry and wicked life; but solely on the trouble which the people felt he had caused them. It is, of course, both proper and right for people to seek relief from unjust burdens, which they are compelled to bear; but that is not the most important task, which needs and deserves their attention. The chief desire of the people in question, should have been to see to it that the moral and spiri-

tual state of the kingdom be restored.

Something of the same situation which troubled the people of Israel at the time of this lesson, also involved the people of Jesus' day. They were laboring and heavy laden, under both the Romans and the Jewish leaders. The former took heavy taxes from the land and sea earnings of the people, while the latter bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders; but they themselves did not move them with their finger. (Matt. 23: 1-4.) It was to such people that Jesus spoke, when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11: 28-30.) There is a great contrast, however, between the attitudes of Jesus and Rehoboam.

But burdens will have to be borne by people, as long as the world remains sinful, and unpleasant conditions will have to be endured; and even if the world itself could make the way of life easier for us, we should never give ourselves into its service. Our sole responsibility is to God; and even if we have to suffer unjustly (1 Pet. 3: 13-17), we have the Lord's promise, if we live for him, which will give us that inward peace, which the world can neither give nor take away. Let us work, then, for a better life here; but above all things else, that the will of the Lord will be done.

### Rehoboam Makes Known His True Character

(1 Kings 12: 6-12)

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



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

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

But if Rehoboam was going to seek advice, he showed wisdom, on the surface at least, by turning to the old men first. However, it is quite evident, from the context, that it was not advice which the king wanted. The old men had themselves been young men; but after years of experience, they were in a better position to tell the king what was best for both the people and himself. They had seen his father

Solomon at his best, and at his worst; and they were therefore prepared to consider the situation then before them objectively. In short, they were prepared to tell the king how he could make certain that his reign would please God, and be a blessing to the people.

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

The bravado which characterized the reply of Rehoboam to the people, had the opposite effect to that which he evidently expected. In the expression "little finger," there is no original word for *finger*; and the idea is simply something little or insignificant. It is as if Rehoboam had said, "The smallest thing about me will be greater than the largest thing about my father." The difference between the "whips" and the "scorpions" was that of severity. The whips were merely lashes, while the scorpions were armed with iron points, which sunk into and tore the flesh.

But instead of the king's flamboyancy cowing the people of Israel into submission to him, his threat precipitated a revolt, on the part of ten tribes of Israel. In the words of

Bacon, "The kingdom of Israel was first rent and broken by ill counsel; upon which there are set, for our instruction, the two marks whereby bad counsel is ever best discerned—that it was young counsel for the persons, and violent counsel for the matter." No better comment can be made on this incident, than that which was made by the inspired historian, namely:

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

*So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade them, saying, Come to me again the third day.*

The value of this portion of the lesson text to us, is to enable us to see the different ways in which the Jews referred to a given period of time. (Cf. Matt. 12: 40; Mark 8: 31; Luke 24: 7; Gen. 42: 17, 18; 2 Chron. 10: 5, 12; Esth. 4: 16; 5: 1; Matt. 27: 63, 64.)

### **The Division of the Kingdom Divinely Ratified**

(1 Kings 12: 21-24)

*And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, that were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solo-*

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

It is interesting to note that Rehoboam, in the passage just quoted, was, for the first time in history, referred to as the "king of Judah." And he was, in addition to being called by that title, the first in a line of nineteen kings who reigned over that portion of the original, and united, kingdom of Israel. The northern realm, also known as the Kingdom of Israel, too, had nineteen kings; but they were divided into nine dynasties: whereas, Judah had only one dynasty, namely, the house of David. One woman, Athaliah, usurped the throne of Judah, and reigned for six years; but she was never reckoned among the rightful rulers of the Southern Kingdom.

The context seems to indicate that Rehoboam's aim in sending Adoram among the people of Israel, was for the purpose of conscripting laborers for some project in which the king was interested; but when the officer was violently killed by the angry citizens, Rehoboam decided that he had better lose no time in getting back to his capital city. And after reaching Jerusalem, he called together a hundred and eighty thousand man army, with the avowed intention of forcing the rebellious tribes back into his realm. Jehovah, however, intervened through one of his prophets—Shemaiah—; and the hand of the king was stayed.

It was not the will of the Lord, that sin should cause the disruption of the kingdom; but since evil was there, Jehovah overruled the course of events, by approving the good and punishing the evil. We learn from 2 Chron. 11: 13-17, that the priests, Levites, and other dedicated Israelites, strengthened the kingdom of Rehoboam for three years, because of the treatment which they,

and especially the priests and Levites, received from the hand of Rehoboam. "So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong three years; for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon."

Rehoboam was not a strong man; and neither was he the worst of men. If he had been properly trained in the court of his father, he might have made a much better king; although it must be kept in mind that he apparently lacked the mentality, which is essential to a wise and vigorous reign. But be that as it may, the words of Lord Macaulay, regarding James I, might also very appropriately be applied to Rehoboam, namely, "Fortune

placed him in a situation in which his weakness covered him with disgrace, and in which his accomplishments brought him no honor."

Rehoboam had eighteen wives, and sixty concubines; and he became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. His favorite wife was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom; and it was her son, Abijah, whom he chose to succeed him on the throne. The other twenty-seven sons were placed in the fortified cities, throughout the land of Judah and Benjamin; "and he gave them victuals in abundance. And he sought for them many wives." (See 2 Chron. 11; 18-23.) The length of Rehoboam's reign in Jerusalem, was seventeen years. (1 Kings 14: 21.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What can be said of the situation in which Rehoboam found himself at the time of this lesson?

Who had been responsible for the conditions which surrounded him and why?

Why was the kingdom of Israel divided?

What is the chief value of today's lesson for our time?

### The Golden Text

In what type of setting is this portion of our lesson for today found?

Discuss the subject of pride—pro and con.

Why, then, is pride such a dangerous trait of character?

What in the best way to get rid of pride, or, which is the same thing, a haughty spirit?

### A Request for Social and Economic Relief

What place did Rehoboam occupy in his father's family and what type of a person was he?

Where was the city of Shechem located and why did Rehoboam go there?

Why were the ten tribes of Israel in a rebellious attitude toward the new king?

What should have been their most dominant desire and aim?

In what way did Jesus deal with substantially the same kind of a situation?

What place do burdens and other unpleasant situations have in the lives of all people?

What should be their attitude toward them?

### Rehoboam Makes Known His True Character

What was the first mistake which Rehoboam made on the occasion of this lesson?

What effect did his conduct evidently have on the assembled multitude and why?

Why would a man like Rehoboam seek the advice of the old men?

Why, then, did he turn so quickly to the young men?

What can you say of the fitness of the two groups for giving counsel to the new king?

What difference did he indicate in talking with the old and young men and why?

What reply did he make to the people and how did it affect them?

What does the inspired record say regarding the result of this meeting?

What lesson should we learn from verse 12 of the lesson text?

### The Division of the Kingdom Divinely Ratified

What peculiarity regarding Rehoboam is noted in this section of the lesson text?

Compare and contrast the two kingdoms of the divided realm.

In what way was Rehoboam deeply impressed with the gravity of the situation?

What did he next propose to do and why didn't he carry out his plans?

What was the Lord's attitude toward the division of the kingdom and how did he deal with the situation?

What unexpected help did Rehoboam receive and how did it come about?

What can you say of the over-all character of his reign?

What is known regarding his family?

Lesson II—October 11, 1970

ASA’S REFORMATION

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 15: 1-15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” (James 4: 8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 16: 8-16.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 5. M..... Rehoboam, King of Judah (1 Kings 14: 21-24)
- October 6. T..... Civil War in Judah (1 Kings 16: 8-16)
- October 7. W..... Seeking God’s Counsel (1 Kings 22: 1-9)
- October 8. T..... War between Judah and Israel (2 Chron. 13: 13-22)
- October 9. F..... Righteousness in Judah (2 Chron. 13: 1-12)
- October 10. S..... Blessings of Righteousness (Psalm 1)
- October 11. S..... God’s Goodness and Severity (Rom. 11: 1-22)

TIME.—955-914 B.C.

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

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

## Introduction

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

Asa was a good king, and his reign of forty-one years was exceeded in length, by only two other kings of Judah, namely, Uzziah, fifty-two years; and Manasseh, fifty-five years. There was only one other ruler in the southern kingdom,

who reigned as many as forty years—Joash. Asa became king of Judah during the closing part of Jeroboam's reign over Israel; and in addition to Jeroboam, he has as his contemporaries the following kings of Israel: Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab, during the first three years of the latter reign.

The great victory which Asa's father Abijah gained over the Israelites, under Jeroboam, along with his devotion to Jehovah, resulted in a period of peace, during the first ten years of Asa's reign. (See 2 Chron. 14: 1, 6, 7.) It was during this period of peace, that Asa brought about many of his religious reforms. Idolatry had plagued the country since the days of Solomon; but when Asa came to the throne, he "did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah his God: for he took away the foreign altars, and the high places, and brake down the pillars, and hewed down the Asherim, and commanded Judah to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment." (See 2 Chron. 14: 2-5; cf. 1 Kings 15: 9-15.)

## The Golden Text

*"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."* The words just quoted are found in the following context: "Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you." (James 4: 7-10.)

The writer of the passage just quoted, is emphasizing the need for a complete separation, on the part of the Lord's people, from the evil world. The Lord of heaven, and the god of this evil world, are diametrically opposed to each other; and if one wants to live with the Lord, even in this world, that is, during one's present lifetime, he must draw near to God; and when that is done, God will certainly draw near to him. Russell Bradley Jones notes

that "the friend of the world is self-centered, a breeder of strife. The friend of God is Christ-centered, a producer of happiness. The friend of the world takes his stand with the arch rebel of the universe. The friend of God takes his stand with the triumphant Christ. Whose friend are you?"

James, in the context quoted above, plainly sets forth both the attitude and the action, which are essential on the part of those who draw near to God. Jehovah is righteous, and holy, and good; and he will not permit sin, in any form, to abide in his presence. This means, of course, that those who go to him, must do so in accordance to his revealed will. Jesus declares in John 14: 6, that no one can go to the Father, except through him; and he also says that "no man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be

taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me." (John 6: 44, 45.) Teaching, learning, and obedience, then, are the essential in-

gredients in drawing near to God. This is essentially that which Asa and the people of Judah did, as we shall see as we proceed with this study.

## The Text Explained

### God's Prophetic Message to Asa

(2 Chron. 15: 1-7)

*And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while you are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: but when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded.*

The apostle Peter says that in olden times, "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1: 21); and this section of the lesson text furnishes a good example of that process. It appears that in the days of the Old Testament period of history, men of God received the Spirit, when they had some special work to do, or some specific message to deliver. Man has never been able to direct his own steps (cf. Jer. 10: 23); and he cannot therefore, by his own unaided powers, learn the will of the Lord. (See Isa. 55: 8, 9.) Jehovah, accordingly, has always revealed his will to men; and it is at this point that the individual's responsibility begins. There is nothing else known of the prophet who spoke to Asa, on the occasion of the situation now under consideration; but it is interesting to know that there were more than twenty-five men in Old Testament times, who bore the name of Azariah.

It will help us in the study at this

time, if our attention is called to some of the events which immediately preceded this section of the lesson text. Reference has already been made to the period of tranquility, which characterized the first part of Asa's reign; and it was during this period of peace and quiet, which came from Jehovah, that Asa strengthened the cities of his kingdom, and enjoyed great prosperity. The king was also careful to give God the credit for all of his blessings. However, it sometimes happens that even the best of men will find themselves depending on human resources, when they are confronted with an unusual crisis; and the inspired writers often call attention to this weakness among men. But it is good to know that Asa was relatively free from this lack of trust in Jehovah. It is true that Asa assembled a great army during his time of peace and prosperity; but there is no indication that he relied upon his military might, rather than upon Jehovah, as we shall presently see.

Jehovah, of course, expects his people to do their part, in a world of sin and opposition to God's way for men; and if one will take into consideration the over-all history of the age of Moses, it will not be difficult for him to see that God's people, at his direction, used armed forces to accomplish his will. And so, when Zerah the Ethiopian came against Asa and his people with an army of a million men, and three hundred chariots, the good king of Judah did not depend upon his army alone for his defense and victory. After the battle was set in array, "Asa cried unto Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this multitude. O Jehovah, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and be-

fore Judah; and the Ethiopians fled." (2 Chron. 14: 12.) This was a manifestation of Asa's faith in Jehovah; and it is one of the reasons why he was called a good king. The Lord's people today would do well to imitate Asa's faith, and make use of his power, for their deliverance from wicked men and nations; for Jehovah still rules in the governments of men. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1-7. Read also 2 Chron. 14: 9-15.)

The message which the prophet Azariah spoke to Asa, came as the king was returning from the slaughter of the Ethiopians. The king had put his trust in Jehovah, in the face of overwhelming odds; and when people demonstrate their faith in God, he never fails to encourage them to greater faithfulness. However, God's message was not to the king only, but also to all Judah and Benjamin. The words, "Jehovah is with you, while you are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you," are just as applicable to people today, as they were when Azariah spoke them. This truth had just been demonstrated by Asa and his people (2 Chron. 14: 9-15); and the same thing is possible for any one who wants to manifest his faith in Jehovah today. No one has ever sought God in vain. (Cf. John 6: 37.) It is, of course, possible for one to deceive himself into thinking that he is seeking the Lord, when in reality he is not; but if one will make certain that he is meeting the conditions, which the Lord has named, there can be no doubt about the result. (Cf. Isa. 55: 6, 7; John 6: 44, 45; 7: 17; Acts 16: 14, 15; Phil. 3: 15, 16.)

That which has just been said about seeking Jehovah, implies that man has the ability to make choices; and what is true of the freedom of the will to choose the good, is also just as true in the opposite direction. It is a fearful thing for a man to turn his back upon the Lord, but that is a responsibility which grows out of free moral agency; and it is just as easy for one to be deceived about his being rejected by God, as it is for him to be misled into thinking that

he is accepting the Lord. It is not necessary therefore for one to be deliberate in his rejection of God, that is, be guilty of the overt act of turning away from the Lord; a refusal to hear and obey that which the Lord commands, is all that is necessary in this connection. (Cf. Matt. 12: 30; Heb. 2: 1-3; Gal. 1: 6-9.)

Bible students are not agreed as to the particular time, when Israel was with the true God, whether during the days of the judges, the time when the northern kingdom was led into idolatry by Jeroboam and his successors, or during the time of Asa's immediate predecessors. Some even think that the reference was to the future. But regardless of the time which Azariah referred to, there is no question regarding the conditions which he described. The people were without God, and a knowledge of his law; because there was no qualified priest to impart that knowledge unto them. (Cf. Lev. 10: 8-11; 2 Chron. 17: 7-9; 2 Kings 17: 24-28.)

When the people of Israel had long been without the true knowledge of God and his law, they found themselves in miserable circumstances, which resulted in their seeking Jehovah; and "he was found of them." (Acts 17: 26-28.) It often happens that distressful conditions prove to be a blessing in disguise. Prosperity, of a worldly kind, often turns people away from God; but if they turn to him in misery, he will be found of them. It is, indeed, a mark of divine favor, when people cannot have peace while in their sins. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they were cast out and denied access to the tree of life; lest they should eat of its fruit and live for ever. (Gen. 3: 22-24.) It sometimes happens that people cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. 6: 14; cf. Isa. 48: 22); but they either are deceiving themselves, or are trying to deceive some one else. Verses 5 and 6, of the text now under consideration, seem to indicate that the miserable conditions referred to, characterized nations other than Israel. They were all, no doubt, affected by the sins of each other.

The closing words of the section

of the text now before us, "But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded," should be understood in the light of the fact, that Asa had already started his work of reforming the conditions which existed among the Lord's people, because of their lack of a knowledge of Jehovah and his law. Verses 3-6 describe the condition of people without God and his righteousness; and the king was urged to continue the reformatory work which he had begun. Jamieson notes that "great resolution and indomitable energy would be required to persevere in the face of the opposition your reforming measures will encounter"; but Jehovah always rewards the efforts of those who seek to destroy evil influences, and lead people back to him.

### **The King's Renewed Zeal in Religious Reforms**

(2 Chron. 15: 8)

*And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill-country of Ephraim; and he renewed the altar of Jehovah, that was before the porch of Jehovah.*

The passage just quoted gives us some idea of the effect which the words of the prophet had on Asa. He immediately renewed his zeal in rooting out the evil shrines and practices, stood between the people and Jehovah; so that they might have his blessings, while endeavoring to serve him. (Cf. 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1.) It has already been pointed out that it takes courage for one to undertake to cleanse the land of sin, and especially after it gets a firm hold on the people, as it evidently had done in the land of Judah and Benjamin. (Cf. 2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) Not only were the people of Asa's day engaged in those sinful practices themselves; they also were encouraged by the idolatrous practices of Solomon, Rehoboam, and other influential leaders, both in their country and in the other nations about them. Any informed and thoughtful observer knows that there are people in our day, who are encouraged in errors and sinful

practices by otherwise good preachers (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 10-15); and that it is next to impossible to overcome such evil influences.

It is well to keep in mind that Asa was not merely an iconoclast. He did indeed root up the prevailing corruptions and abominations, which infested the land; but he put something better in their places. He renewed the altar of burnt-offerings, and restored it to its proper place and service. Jesus taught a similar lesson in one of his parables, namely, "But the unclean spirit, when he is gone out of the man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest, and findeth it not. Then he saith, I will return into my house whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man becometh worse than the first." (Matt. 12: 43-45.) The lesson here is obvious: It does little good to take away the evil, if something better is not put in its place.

After getting rid of that which is displeasing to God, the process is but half completed. The evils which have been driven out, must be replaced immediately with the good, honorable, truthful, and best. (Cf. Tit. 2: 11, 12.) Uprooting sins is to be commended, provided the one who does it proceeds at once to grow virtues in their places. 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 his garden, and prepares the ground for the reception of good seed; he only invites a new crop of weeds, briars, and maybe something much worse. If religion is to be a power for good in our lives, then there must be something in the minds and hearts, which will persuade our reason and understanding, and appeal to our sense of the beautiful and the good; or, something to which we can give the full consent of our intelligence and better selves. There must be something which we believe and sincerely desire, in the full and better meanings of those terms.



(Cf. Heb. 11: 6; James 2: 14-26; Matt. 22: 34-40.)

### Asa and the People Unite in a Covenant to Serve Jehovah

(2 Chron. 15: 9-15)

*And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they sacrificed unto Jehovah in that day, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul; and that whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they sware unto Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with comets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and Jehovah gave them rest round about.*

It can easily be seen, by consulting a map, that Ephraim and Manasseh were north of Judah and Benjamin, while Simeon was south of them. However, it should be noted that they were all joined together in a single block of the territory, which had been allotted to the tribes of Israel. The action of the people who came out of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, shows that not all of the people in the kingdom of Israel were satisfied with the things that were being done in their homeland. Many of those people were ready to join with Asa and his people, when they saw that Jehovah was with them. This gives some idea of the opportunities which were Asa's; and what was true of him, is also true of the Lord's people today, as we shall see in the next paragraph.

These Old Testament examples should greatly aid those of us who are engaged in the current Restora-

tion Movement. All who are familiar with the New Testament, and the history of the church, are aware of the fact that there was a falling away from the original pattern, which the Lord set up. After passing through the period of corruption, known as the "dark ages," men began various efforts at reformation; but not being able to succeed in those endeavors, the next several decades witnessed the origin, growth, and development of Protestant Denominationalism. It was not long, however, before some of the denominationalists themselves began to realize that they were far away from the Lord's original plan for his church; and it was *they* who inaugurated the Restoration Movement. And it is very probable that the church grew faster during the early days of that movement, than at any time since the days of the apostles. Furthermore, there is every reason for thinking that the church will continue to attract others from denominationalism to itself, when they begin to see that our aim is to get back to the Lord's will and way for his people. This is both our great opportunity and responsibility; and may the Lord help us to recognize it.

The great gathering in Jerusalem, on the part of Asa and the people, was doubtless for the purpose of celebrating the feast of Pentecost, which the law of Moses required to be done in Jerusalem, in the third month of their religious year. (Cf. Lev. 23: 15-21; Deut. 16: 9-12.) The oxen and the sheep which they sacrificed, were apparently those which they had taken from the Ethiopians. (2 Chron. 14: 12-15.) When people really turn to the Lord, there is no further trouble, regarding their offerings to him (cf. 2 Cor. 8: 1-5); and if they do not know their duty in this respect, they will make an effort to learn it (cf. 2 Cor. 9: 6-11).

The covenant which those people made, (1) to seek Jehovah with all their heart and soul, and (2) to put to death any who would not do so, was evidently intended to increase their sense of obligation, in doing that which God had commanded them to do. It is one thing to know and understand that which God has

spoken, but that alone will not suffice; there must be a determined effort on the part of the people to do *their* duty. It is also well to remember that God will not accept half-hearted service from his people; they must make him first in all their relationships of life.

The rejoicing which followed the oath which Asa and the people took, was for a good reason, namely, they had dealt idolatry a death-blow; and their oath made their covenant to seek Jehovah binding. And, as further evidence of his sincerity, Asa removed the queen-mother (cf.

1 Kings 15: 1, 2) from her place in the royal household, along with her idolatry, the physical remains of

which he burned with fire at the brook Kidron. Some of the places of idolatrous worship were allowed to remain; but there is no indication that they were used by the people of Judah. The peace which followed the great reformation continued for twenty years. (See 2 Chron. 15: 16-19; see also verse 10.)

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

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What place did Asa occupy in the dynasty of David?

With what kind of a background did he come to the throne?

How long did Asa reign and how did he compare with other kings of Judah?

What was the state of the kingdom when Asa was elevated to the throne?

### The Golden Text

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

What is the primary purpose of the passage we are now considering?

What is always essential, if one is to live with and for the Lord, and why?

How, alone, may one draw near to God?

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

### God's Prophetic Message to Asa

By what means did God make his will known to Asa and what bearing does that have on New Testament teaching?

Discuss the inspired background of the lesson for today.

What attitude did the king manifest toward Jehovah?

Did Asa's army indicate a lack of trust in Jehovah? Give reasons for your answer.

What important lesson should we get from the circumstances now before us?

Under what circumstances did the prophet speak his message to Asa?

In what way do his words find application in our day?

Why is man urged to seek Jehovah, that is, what does that exhortation imply?

What brought on the dreadful condition in which the people were at the time of this lesson?

What gracious promise was made to Asa through the prophet?

### The King's Renewed Zeal in Religious Reforms

What motivated the king's action, as indicated in this section of the lesson text?

What increased the difficulty in accomplishing the work which was before Asa?

Give a resume of the reforms which were brought about by the king.

What lesson did Jesus teach along these same lines?

What is the principal value of the lessons in all of this to us?

What is always essential to a great religious reformation?

### Asa and the People Unite in a Covenant to Serve Jehovah

What encouragement did Asa and his people get from some of the surrounding tribes of Israel?

What particular tribes were involved and where were they located?

Why were they anxious to cast their lot with Asa and the people of Judah and Benjamin?

What great responsibility did all of this place upon the king and why?

What particular application does all of this have for us?

What is the Restoration Movement and how did it come into being?

What was the occasion of the great feast which was held in Jerusalem at the time of this lesson?

What always happens when people really turn to the Lord?

What was the covenant which they made and why did they rejoice so greatly?

Lesson III—October 18, 1970

JEHOSHAPHAT'S GOOD REIGN

Lesson Text

2 Chron. 17: 1-6, 10-19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats.

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

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

14 And this was the numbering of them according to their fathers' houses: Of Ju'-dah, the captains of thousands: Ad'-nah the captain, and with him mighty men of valor three hundred thousand;

15 And next to him Je-h6-ha'-nan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand;

16 And next to him Am-a-si'-ah the son of Zich'-ri, who willingly offered himself unto Je-ho'-vah; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor.

17 And of Ben'-ja-min: E-li'-a-da a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield;

18 And next to him Je-hoz'-a-bad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for war.

19 These were they that waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Ju'-dah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And Jehoshaphat . . . brought them back unto Jehovah, the God of their fathers(2 Chron. 19: 4.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Kings 22: 41-50.

Daily Bible Readings

- October 12. M.....Captivity of Israel (2 Kings 18: 9-12)
- October 13. T.....Judah Invaded (2 Kings 18: 13-18)
- October 14. W.....Hope for the Future (2 Kings 19: 1-7)
- October 15. T.....Asa Receives Good Advice (2 Chron. 15: 1-7)
- October 16. F.....Death of Asa (2 Chron. 16: 11-14)
- October 17. S.....Jehoshaphat, a Good Man (2 Chron. 17: 1-6)
- October 18. S.....Jehoshaphat, a Rich Man (2 Chron. 18: 1-3)

TIME.—914-889 B.C.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and the land of Judah.

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

## Introduction

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

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

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

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

## The Golden Text

*"And Jehoshaphat . . . brought them back unto Jehovah, the God of their fathers."* Regardless of what one's position may be in the economy of God, he has a tremendous responsibility with reference to the spiritual well-being of his fellow citizens; and the greater the sphere of his influence, the greater will be his responsibility. Jehoshaphat was the king, and there was, of course, no one in the realm who was in position to exercise greater influence than he. The people of the Lord

had departed from him, and it was the duty of the king, along with other good people, to do what could be accomplished in bringing them back to the God of their fathers. This, of course, is a responsibility of good people, in any age of the world. Paul exhorts, "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." (Gal. 6: 1.)

It is not God's will that a single

soul be lost eternally. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2: 3, 4.) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3: 9; Ezek. 33: 11.) The scriptures just cited present the Divine side of the picture; and we do not get the full story, until we realize that the work of winning others to Christ, has been placed in the hands of the Lord's people. So far as the record goes, Deity has not personally led a soul to salvation, since the gospel message (Rom. 1: 16, 17) was placed in the hands of men. (Acts 22: 10.)

Something of that which is involved in the ministry of reconciliation, which the Lord has committed

to his people, may be seen by reading James 5: 19, 20, namely, "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." It should not seem strange to any one, that James closes his letter with an appeal to Christian people to endeavor to win souls for the Lord. If he was the half-brother of Jesus, as many Bible students think, he was but following his Famous Brother and Lord's own example; for it appears to have been the Lord's last day on earth, when he said to his disciples, "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; see also verses 19, 20.)

## The Text Explained

### The Beginning of Jehoshaphat's Godly Reign

(2 Chron. 17: 1-6)

*And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel. And he placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. And Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the Baalim, but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore Jehovah established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat tribute; and he had riches and honor in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of Jehovah: and furthermore he took away the high places and the Asherim out of Judah.*

It was approximately sixty years after the division of the kingdom, when Jehoshaphat came to the throne; and war between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms had been going on practically all of that time. But a few years before the death of Asa, the kingdom of Is-

rael was divided by warring factions (see 1 Kings 16: 21f), which greatly weakened it, and made it possible for the smaller kingdom of Judah to have the advantage. It was against this background that the statement that Jehoshaphat "strengthened himself against Israel" was made. The strong position which Jehoshaphat was able to assume was accomplished by placing units of his army in the principal cities of Judah, and in all the cities of Ephraim, which his father had taken from the Northern Kingdom, as well as setting up military installations, wherever they were needed in the open country. This was especially true along the border between the two rival kingdoms.

The "first ways" of David evidently refer to the earlier part of his life, before the dark clouds of sin, such as those in connection with his wicked relationship with Bathsheba, hovered over him. But David's life, on the whole, was acceptable to Jehovah; because when he did fall into sin, he turned to Jehovah for pardon. There is no record that David ever went after the Baalim (the plural for Baal), and that was also true of Jehoshaphat, as the text now under consideration

plainly affirms. Or, to state the same thing in another way, Jehoshaphat imitated the best in David's life, and also kept himself free from all forms of idol-worship, such as characterized the people of the northern kingdom.

But that was not all that Jehoshaphat did: he sought after the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, which is another way of saying that in following the ways of David, he followed him to the extent that the latter followed Jehovah. (1 Cor. 11: 1.) It is always a great blessing to any one, when he has the godly example of his forebearers, and other righteous people. (2 Tim. 1: 3.) It is indeed a rare privilege for one to be born in the line of a faithful Christian parentage. There is, in such a relationship, much more than godly examples, and wise and faithful instruction. There is in addition to the things just mentioned, as some one has pointed out, tendencies in character development, which spring from the line of natural descent. It is a wonderful blessing therefore, to have had the fountain of our moral being purified and vitalized, by this gracious law of God's moral and spiritual government.

It appears to have been customary, among the people of Israel, to offer gifts to the king at the beginning of his reign (1 Sam. 10: 27); and these presents were probably intended for the royal splendor of the king himself, as well as for the maintenance of his government. The King James Version of the passage now under consideration, has "presents" instead of *tribute* (cf. verse 11); but regardless of the nature of that which the people of Judah brought to their king, the text makes it plain that "he had riches and honor in abundance." This also showed that Jehoshaphat had the confidence and support of his entire realm. And it was because of this righteous attitude which Jehoshaphat manifested, that Jehovah "established the kingdom in his hand."

One frequently reads of some one's heart being lifted up with pride, or in support of some false religion; but it is genuinely refresh-

ing to read of a man's heart being "lifted up in the ways of Jehovah." The practical meaning of the expression just quoted, is that Jehoshaphat brought his heart into the work which had been given him to do, as a result of his faith and piety, and the increase in his zeal, as he sought to do that which was pleasing to the Lord. It also should be noted that the more he sought to follow in the ways of Jehovah, the more he demonstrated his opposition to those things which were displeasing to his heavenly Father. The piety and holy energy which Jehoshaphat displayed, made him more like David, than any other of the kings of Judah, with the possible exception of Hezekiah.

### The Influence of Jehoshaphat—At Home and Abroad

(2 Chron. 17: 10-12)

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

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

"And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they may gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his

work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness which is of me, saith Jehovah." (Isa. 54: 13-17.)

While verses 7-9, of the chapter from which the lesson text for today is taken, are not a part of this study, those verses should be carefully read; for they set forth one of the major reasons for the great success of Jehoshaphat, namely, his great religious teaching program. The record says that he sent some of his princes, and with them some priests and Levites, to teach in the cities of Judah. "And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them; and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people." (Verse 9.) The good king of Judah could never have had the enthusiastic support of his people, in the cause of the Lord, if they had not been taught the word of the Lord. There are many churches today, among the Lord's people, which are in a virtual state of rebellion against their elders, simply because they have not been carefully and sufficiently taught the word of truth. If elders, wherever they are, would follow the principle which actuated Jehoshaphat, and many, of course, do just that, there would be much more harmony and cooperation on the part of the membership of the congregation, and a greater willingness and determination to follow the lead of the elders.

Isaac Errett, in commenting on the great program of Jehoshaphat, says, "Jehoshaphat was wise in this: he saw that the work of reformation under his father did not reach to the roots of the evil that cursed the nation; it was merely or mainly an *external* change, while the *sources* of iniquity still remained untouched. Asa had sought to dry up the *streams*, but left the *fountains* still flowing. Jehoshaphat therefore determined on an advance movement. He saw that the people were profoundly ignorant of the law of Jehovah, and were consequently an easy prey to superstition. They were

ignorant of the glorious history of their own nation, and consequently were destitute of the enlightened patriotism without which there would be no enthusiastic devotion to their own laws and institutions. He accordingly arranged a system of general instruction—of national education. Under the direction of five of the princes of the land, he sent forth priests and Levites 'to teach in the cities of Judah.'

"Here are the germs of a system of national education—a system far in advance of our boasted system of public schools; for, in our pride and self-sufficiency, we are banishing the Bible from our public schools, and tabooing in a large degree all moral and religious instruction, relying on merely intellectual culture to produce and foster the intelligence and virtue which are the two great pillars of the temple of liberty—although it is rapidly becoming evident that we are thus leaning vainly on a broken reed; while Jehoshaphat saw that moral and religious culture was essential to a true patriotism, and therefore was careful to have the people 'taught in the book of the law of Jehovah.' We are not forgetful of the fact that the government of Judah was a theocracy, and that Jehoshaphat could therefore properly insist on a popular education in the law of the Lord which, in our Republic, in theory divorced from religion, and made up of all sorts of people, where the irreligious and atheistic and Jewish and pagan elements are potent, is impracticable. We see and acknowledge the difference; yet we record our conviction, in the face of this tremendous difficulty, that by *some means*—if not by the action of the State, then by the missionary zeal and voluntary efforts of the church, our population must be morally and religiously educated, or our glorious Republic will perish. Its interests cannot be conserved by the godless culture of our public schools."

If we are going to talk about Jehoshaphat's good reign, then we must consider those contributing factors which made it such; and if we are going to profit by the study of that which took place in Jehoshaphat's day, then we must seek to

apply the same principles to our time and situation. The church of the Lord is the greatest organism in the world today; and if we expect the Lord to pronounce his blessings upon us, that is, call us "good," then we, and especially those who are in positions of influence and leadership, must see to it that God's people are taught, and are encouraged to put into practice, the fundamental truths of the New Testament. The program which Jehoshaphat inaugurated had a profound effect upon the nations around him; and in the same way, the Lord's people today must be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Instead of the nations surrounding Judah making war upon those people, the record says that some of them brought presents and tributes to Jehoshaphat. These were powerful testimonials to the superiority and invincibility of an enlightened and righteous people. (Cf. Psalm 72—*The Reign of the Righteous King*—which apparently contains the dying thoughts and sentiments of David; but which was written by his son Solomon.)

### The Material Side of the Reign of Jehoshaphat

(2 Chron. 17: 13-19)

*And he had many works in the cities of Judah; and men of war, mighty men of valor, in Jerusalem. And this was the numbering of them according to their fathers' houses: Of Judah, the captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him mighty men of valor three hundred thousand; and next to him Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand; and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto Jehovah; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor. And of Benjamin: Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield; and next to him Jehozabad, and with him a hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for war. These were they that waited on the king, besides those whom the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.*

In speaking of the peace and pros-

perity of the righteous, we should keep in mind the fact, that during the Old Testament period, the people of God, and particularly after they were organized into a kingdom, like the nations about them, used armed forces, not only for their protection, but also for the punishment of evildoers. Those kingdoms were theocratic in their nature, which means that they were under the immediate direction of God. The religious aspect of their government was administered by prophets and priests, ordained by God; while their civil relationships were regulated by the chief of state and his ministers. Both, let it be remembered, were united under the over-seership of God himself.

But when we come to the kingdom of Christ, no such conditions exist; there is, instead, a separation of "church" and "state." Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18: 36.) Peter exhorts the Lord's people of this age, "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.) The attitude of the Lord's people toward civil governments is set forth in such passages as Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Pet. 2: 13-17. All civil governments of men are ordained of God; but they are not, because of what they are, in covenant relationship with him. And with this in mind, there does not appear to be anything inconsistent, with either their nature or purpose, in maintaining standing armies, for their own protection, as well as for use, in the providence of God, in punishing wicked nations. (Dan. 4: 17; Isa. 10: 5-11; Hab. 1: 5-17.)

But even righteous people today, are often respected by the unrighteous; but if they are not, and are called on to suffer persecution, because of their devotion to the Lord,



they are still blessed of God. (1 Pet. 3: 13ff.) It frequently requires suffering and hardships, on the part of the Lord's people, in order to reach some who will not otherwise listen to the gospel message; but we may be sure that God will never forget to bless those who suffer in this way. (Matt. 5: 10-12; Rev. 6: 9-11.)

Although the kingdom of Judah was relatively small, Jehoshaphat had a tremendous army of well over a million men, as may be seen from this section of the lesson text. But even with that kind of an armed force, he did not forget to put his trust in the Lord. "And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah

and Jerusalem in the house of Jehovah, before the new court; and he said, O Jehovah, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and art not thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? and in thy hand in power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee. . . .

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." (Read 2 Chron. 20.) It should be noted, however, that the enemies did come against Jehoshaphat, after his unholy alliance with the house of Ahab.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

What are some of the background facts regarding the reign of king Jehoshaphat?

What were some of the contributing factors to his successful reign?

What were the guiding principles in the reforms which he instituted?

### The Golden Text

What responsibility rests upon the shoulders of every child of God?

Why does God require these things of his people?

What are some of the blessings which grow out of the ministry of reconciliation?

What possible reason can you give for James's closing his letter with a plea for soul-saving?

### The Beginning of Jehoshaphat's Godly Reign

What were the prevailing conditions when Jehoshaphat came to the throne?

Why did Judah enjoy an advantage over Israel at that time?

What were the "first ways" of David?

What was Jehoshaphat's primary aim in life, as he began to reign?

Discuss some of the examples which he had before him?

What should forebearers always try to make possible for their descendants?

In what way did the people of Judah and Benjamin honor their new king?

What outstanding disposition did Jehoshaphat show at the beginning of his reign?

### The Influence of Jehoshaphat—at Home and Abroad

What usually happens to the man whose ways please the Lord?

Why is this true and how is it brought about?

Why was Jehoshaphat so successful in his over-all program as king?

What important lesson should we get from his example?

Why are so many people acting contrary to the wishes of the eldership?

How can these conditions best be corrected?

Tell, in your own words, why you think that Jehoshaphat was such a good king.

What about his program could the people of our day, both in the church and out of it, adopt for themselves with great advantage?

### The Material Side of the Reign of Jehoshaphat

Why did the kings of the Lord's people in Old Testament times keep large standing armies?

What was peculiar about the manner in which they were governed during that period?

How does that arrangement differ from the Lord's plan for this age of the world?

What is the Christian's relationship to civil governments and what attitude should he manifest toward them?

What should the child of God expect from the people of the world today?

What does the Bible say about the army which Jehoshaphat maintained?

How much did he depend upon his military force for protection and freedom from bondage?

## Lesson IV—October 25, 1970

## THE TEMPLE REPAIRED

## Lesson Text

## 2 Chron. 24: 4-13

4 And it came to pass after this, that Jo'-ash was minded to restore the house of Je-ho'-vah.

5 And he gathered together the priests and the Le'-vites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Ju'-dah, and gather of all Is'-ra-el money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Le'-vites hastened it not.

6 And the king called for Je-hoi'-a-da the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Le'-vites to bring in out of Ju'-dah and out of Je-ru'-sa-lem the tax of Mo'-ses the servant of Je-ho'-vah, and of the assembly of Is'-ra-el, for the tent of the testimony?

7 For the sons of Ath-a-li'-ah, that, wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of Je-ho'-vah did they bestow upon the Ba'-al-im.

8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of Je-ho'-vah.

9 And they made a proclamation through Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem,

to bring in for Je-ho'-vah the tax that Mo'-ses the servant of God laid upon Is'-ra-el in the wilderness.

10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end.

11 And it was so, that, at what time the chest was brought unto the king's officers by the hand of the Le'-vites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

12 And the king and Je-hoi'-a-da gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of Je-ho'-vah; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Je-ho'-vah, and also such as wrought iron and brass to repair the house of Je-ho'-vah.

13 So the workmen wrought, and the work of repairing went forward in their hands, and they set up the house of God in its state, and strengthened it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And the men did the work faithfully."* (2 Chron. 34: 12.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 24: 15-19.

## Daily Bible Readings

October 19. M.....	The First Temple (1 Chron. 22: 1-15)
October 20. T.....	David's Ambition (2 Sam. 7: 1-9)
October 21. W.....	Solomon Builds the Temple (1 Kings 6; 2 Chron. 3, 4)
October 22. T.....	The Temple Dedicated (1 Kings 8: 12-16)
October 23. F.....	Destroyed by Shishak (2 Chron. 12: 1-9)
October 24. S.....	Temple Repaired by Joash (2 Chron. 24: 4-14)
October 25. S.....	Polluted by Manasseh (2 Chron. 33: 1-7)

TIME.—About 855 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Joash, Jehoiada, and others.

## Introduction

"The Temple Repaired" is a subject which raises some specific questions, and demands some specific answers. For example, why was the temple in need of repairs? and how did that situation come about? The

work of repairing the temple, on the occasion of this lesson, was done during the reign of Joash, known as the boy king, because of his tender age at the time of his coronation. Joash, the abbreviated form of Je-

hoash, was the seventh king of Judah (Athaliah, the usurper, was not reckoned in the line of David). His grandmother, Athaliah, ruled the kingdom of Judah for six years, immediately preceding the reign of Joash; but she had no divine right to be on the throne.

It was during the time of the wicked Athaliah, that the temple was plundered of its vessels, for the service of Baal, and injured in its fabric; and that, along with the neglect of God's house, in favor of idolatrous worship, made the repairs which Joash instituted absolutely essential. It was pointed out in an earlier lesson, that Jehoram, the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; and when Jehu executed Jehovah's decree to destroy the house of Ahab, Jehoram's son and successor, Ahaziah, was one of the victims. (See 2 Kings 8: 18; 9: 27, 28.) All the other sons of Jehoram were destroyed by the invad-

ing Philistines and Arabians. (See 2 Chron. 21: 16, 17; 22: 1.)

After the death of Ahaziah, his mother Athaliah murdered all the heirs to the throne, with the exception of Joash. "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land." (2 Chron. 22: 10-12.) This is the background against which we are to consider the lesson for today.

### The Golden Text

*"And the men did the work faithfully."* The men referred to in this text were not the men who repaired the temple, during the reign of Joash; but those who did a similar work, more than two hundred and twenty-five years later, during the reign of Josiah. (See 2 Chron. 34: 8-12.) But if one will turn to 2 Kings 12: 9-15, he will see that substantially the same thing was true of the men who repaired the temple during the time of Joash. After saying that none of the money which was collected for repairing the temple, was used to make vessels for the temple, the inspired historian said, "For they gave that to them that did the work, and repaired therewith the house of Jehovah. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work; for they dealt faithfully."

Faithfulness on the part of the Lord's people, is a requirement in any area of life; and on the part of every responsible individual. Peter writes, "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:

10); while Paul declares, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4: 1, 2.) Paul was a steward of the gospel of Christ, and his responsibility was to preach it (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 16-18); but his responsibility, in principle, was not greater than the duty of any other child of God, regardless of what that duty involves. This is precisely what Jesus himself taught. After speaking the parable of the unrighteous steward, our Lord said:

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles. He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and

love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Luke 16: 9-13; cf. Matt. 25: 14-30.) The words of Jennie Wilson seem appropriate:

Can the Master call me faithful  
When the darkness falls for me?  
Leaving earthly fields of labor  
Heaven's glories shall I see?

Am I toiling in the harvest  
Where for him I ought to reap,  
Gath'ring sheaves all bright and  
golden

Ere the shades of night grow deep?

Out on sin's bleak, lonely mountains  
Precious souls have gone astray;  
Jesus bids me help to save them,  
Am I seeking to obey?

May the Holy Spirit guide me  
In the work that I should do,  
So that to the loving Master  
I may never be untrue.

Can the Master call me faithful  
When time's fleeting day is done?  
By my glad, whole-hearted service  
Will the crown of life be won?

### The Text Explained

#### The King's Motive for Repairing the Temple

(2 Chron. 24: 4-7)

*And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to restore the house of Jehovah. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the tax of Moses the servant of Jehovah, and of the assembly of Israel, for the tent of the testimony? For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah did they bestow upon the Baalim.*

It is easy for the student of the Scriptures to recognize the workings of divine providence, through the period of biblical history; and there is a notable example of it in connection with Joash and his reign. Why was the young heir to the throne permitted to live, when his wicked grandmother was determined to destroy all the "seed royal of the house of Judah"? She did indeed succeed in slaying all of the children of her last surviving son, after his death; but she failed to take into consideration a promise which Jehovah had made to David, namely:

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I

am going the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his ordinances, and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that Jehovah may establish his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel." (1 Kings 2: 1-4.) If Athaliah had succeeded in killing Joash, along with "all the seed royal of the house of Judah," God's promise to David could not have been kept.

Furthermore, it might have been that Jehovah saw that the time had come, when the temple should be repaired; and he knew that a righteous man, such as Joash was at the time the work was done (in the twenty-third year of his reign—2 Kings 12: 6), could be depended upon for that service. At any rate, that was the way Joash felt about the matter; and ordered that preparations be made for that great undertaking.

The law of Moses had made provisions for keeping the temple in a good state of repair, but it appears that the men who should have been looking after such matters, were not themselves very interested. The sources of revenue for the service of the temple, which evidently included needed repairs, were speci-

fied by Moses, as may be seen by reading Ex. 30: 11-16. This was the temple tax, paid annually by all free male Jews over twenty years of age; and which was referred to by Jesus in Matt. 17: 24-27.

The record in 2 Kings seems to indicate that the priests were to do two things, namely, (1) see to the collection of the money, and (2) repair the breaches in the house of the Lord. "And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the hallowed things that is brought into the house of Jehovah, in current money, the money of the persons for whom each man is rated, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of Jehovah, let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the breaches of the house, whosoever any breach shall be found. But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. And the priests consented that they should take no more money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house." (2 Kings 12: 4-8.)

Nothing is said about the disposition of the money which the priests had collected from the people; but it may have been used for the personal needs of the priests and Levites. At any rate, the work for which the money was collected was not done; and the king ordered that no more money be collected from the people by the priests. The section of the lesson text now before us, says that both the priests and the Levites were charged with the responsibilities which Joash placed upon them. "And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out into the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year; and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not." (2 Chron. 24: 4.)

Two things should be noted in the passage just quoted, namely, (1) the temple tax was to be collected annually—"from year to year"; and (2) the Levites were remiss in their duty. The same principles involved here, are just as applicable to our day. There is no doubt regarding the fact that the Lord has provided the necessary sources for all the money which is needed in his work (cf. 1 Cor. 9: 13, 14; 16: 1, 2; 2 Cor., chapters 8 and 9); and if those who are responsible for giving the money out of that which is in their possession, any need in the cause of the Lord will be met. But any student of the Bible knows that such unanimous and spontaneous action on the part of the Lord's people, has never been known in the regular conduct of his work.

But inasmuch as many professed children of God do not take their responsibility to provide money for his work seriously, it has always been necessary that faithful brethren stir them up in that direction. (Read again 2 Cor. 9: 1-5.) Many brethren apparently are not as zealous as Titus was in this respect; and too, there are others who, while zealous enough, leave the impression that the collections must satisfy their desires first. It is true that the Lord teaches that "the laborer is worthy of his hire"; but that does not justify a person's emphasizing, first and foremost, his share in the money which has been contributed for the Lord's cause.

### A New Method Chosen

(2 Chron. 24: 8-11)

*So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of Jehovah. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for Jehovah the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. And it was so, that, at what time the chest was brought unto the king's officers by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and*

*took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.*

After the priests and the Levites had failed in their responsibility to carry out the duties which had been imposed upon them, the king, who was determined to get the work accomplished, decided upon a new approach to the question. Instead of permitting the priests and Levites to collect the money for the needed repairs on the temple themselves, a chest was constructed, and a hole was bored in its lid. The chest was then placed in a convenient place, where those who were interested could have access to it. "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of Jehovah; and the priests that kept the threshold put therein all the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah." (2 Kings 12: 9.)

It is generally true that when people are made to realize the need for an offering for some worthy cause, or to return to the Lord that which is rightfully his, they are glad to do what they can; often to the extent of making a genuine sacrifice. "And he sat down over against the treasury, and beheld how the multitude cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." (Mark 12: 41-44.) This should be enough to show us that it is not the amount which one gives, but rather the motive behind the gift, and the spirit in which it is given. It is not difficult to get people to give, when they are properly motivated. (Cf. Ex. 25: 1-7; 35: 20-29; 36: 2-7.)

A failure to use the money which is contributed in the Lord's service, may sometimes discourage people from giving as they should. This, apparently, was one of the reasons why more money was not given to

the priests, as we have already seen. Those who are in the positions of leadership in the church, should always make it plain to the congregation just what the contributions are for, generally speaking; and they then should demonstrate their faithfulness in seeing to it that the money is used for the purpose for which it was contributed. The work of the Lord is always in need of "repairs"; and if those who have obligations in that connection will do their God-ordained part, the needed funds will always be available.

Some years ago, just before a great depression, a mid-western church conducted a very successful gospel meeting, with the help of a visiting evangelist, and a song director from another part of the country. Both men did their work well, and were invited to return for a similar effort the following year. They both accepted the invitation: and both they and the congregation were looking forward to another good meeting. However, during the months ahead, the depression "struck," and the elders decided that they could not support the men whom they had engaged for the forthcoming meeting, as they had done the year before; and it appeared best to notify them, and cancel the meeting which was planned.

Both the preacher and the song leader realized the seriousness of the monetary situation, but they felt that the meeting should be conducted as planned. They, accordingly, agreed to offer to go for the meeting, but would not expect the same amount of financial support, which they had received the year before. And then, in order to make practical that which they had in mind, they wrote the elders that they would be glad to return and do their parts in the meeting; and suggested that if they would simply announce to the congregation, that whatever the contributions were for the two Lord's days of the meeting, the visiting ministers would accept that, and would be perfectly satisfied, so far as money was concerned.

The elders decided that that was a fair offer, and they notified the two men that they would do as they suggested, and that they would con-

sider the offerings for the two Lord's days of the meeting, money contributed for the meeting. The meeting was conducted as scheduled, and the announcements regarding the contributions were made, as suggested and agreed to. The elders explained to the congregation that they did not feel that the church could afford to support the visiting evangelists as they had done the year before, and that the two men would be satisfied with whatever the offerings were for the two Lord's days of the meeting. The congregation, apparently, felt that both the visitors and the elders were being fair about the matter; and that no one was being pressured into doing more than he was able to do.

*But*, and herein comes the rub, the elders were surprised when they learned that the contributions for the two Lord's days of the meeting, totaled four hundred dollars, and they simply said that that was more than they could afford to pay for the meeting; and they did not give the money to the men who had done their part in the meeting. This particular thing may not have happened to any other congregation among the Lord's people; but in how many other instances have leaders in the Lord's church failed to use the offerings, which have been made in good faith, for the purposes for which they were made? The Lord has revealed his plan for saving the lost, and he also tells us in his word what he expects of his people, with reference to their material possessions; and it is essential, if we expect to be saved, to follow his revealed will in all instances.

#### **And a New Plan for Doing: the Work** (2 Chron. 24: 12, 13)

*And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of Jehovah; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Jehovah, and also such as wrought iron and brass*

*to repair the house of Jehovah. So the workmen wrought, and the work of repairing went forward in their hands, and they set up the house of God in its state, and strengthened it.*

The parallel record in 2 Kings 12, should be read along with the lesson text in 2 Chronicles, for it is very evident that they supplement each other. It appears that the priests and the Levites were directly responsible for the maintenance of the house of Jehovah; but that does not necessarily imply that every individual priest and Levite was to engage in that service. Observe the statement, "And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of Jehovah; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of Jehovah." If, as the record in 2 Kings seems to indicate, the priests were expected to do the work, then it appears that a change in plans was made. "The king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. And the priests consented that they should take no more money from the people, *neither repair the breaches of the house.*"

At any rate, those who were responsible for the work, hired others, that is, those who were prepared to do the job; and in due time the needed repairs were made. Robert Jamieson, in commenting on 2 Kings 12: 7f, says, "The mode of collection was not proving so productive as was expected, the dilatoriness of the priests was the chief cause of the failure, and a new arrangement was proposed." The matter was then taken out of the hands of the priests, and placed under the direction of the king; and he, in turn, had his overseers secure men who were capable of bringing the work to a completion.

### **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 questions which are

suggested by the subject of today's lesson?

Who was the king at the time of this lesson?

Why did the temple need to be repaired?

How did Athaliah come to seize the throne of Judah and who was she?

#### The Golden Text

Who were the men of the golden text who did the work faithfully and what work?

What does the New Testament teach with reference to faithfulness on the part of the Lord's people?

#### The King's Motive for Repairing the Temple

What lesson regarding divine providence may one learn from this study?

What is signified by "divine providence"?

Why was it necessary for Jehovah to intervene in the government of Judah at this time?

What kind of a king did Joash make and why?

What provision did the law of Moses make for the care and service of the temple?

What was the principal source of revenue for temple repairs?

Who, apparently, were responsible for this service and what did they do about it?

How did the king, then, deal with the situation?

What lesson is suggested in this for our day?

What are some of the hindrances in raising money for the Lord's work now?

#### A New Method Chosen

What important change was made in collecting money for repairing the temple? Describe this new procedure.

Why is successful Christian giving always in need of proper motivation?

What did Jesus teach regarding this issue?

What is the most important thing about Christian giving?

Why are many people often discouraged regarding giving to the Lord's service?

How can this kind of a situation best be remedied?

Why are leaders in the church sometimes unwilling to keep the congregation fully informed regarding that which is contributed into the church's treasury?

How much does a congregation have the right to know about such matters?

Briefly state something of the Lord's plan for his people's giving.

#### And a New Plan for Doing the Work

In what way may we get all the facts regarding the work of repairing the temple at the time of this lesson?

What change was made in the plan of operation and why?

How was the work on the temple repairs brought to a successful conclusion?

## Lesson V—November 1, 1970

# THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND

### Lesson Text

2 Kings 22: 8-20

8 And Hil-ki'-ah the high priest said unto Sha'-phan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Je-ho'-vah. And Hil-ki'-ah delivered the book to Sha'-phan, and he read it.

9 And Sha'-phan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of Je-ho'-vah.

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

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12 And the king commanded Hil-ki'-ah the priest, and A-hi'-kam the son of Sha'-phan, and Ach'-bor the son of Mi-ca'-iah, and Sha'-phan the scribe, and A-sa'-iah the king's servant, saying,

13 Go ye, inquire of Je-ho'-vah

for me, and for the people, and for all Ju'-dah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Je-ho'-vah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

14 So Hil-ki'-ah the priest, and A-hi'-kam, and Ach'-bor, and Sha'-phan, and A-sa'-iah, went unto Hul'-dah the prophetess, the wife of Shal'-lum the son of Tik'-vah, the son of Har'-has, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Je-ru'-salem in the second quarter); and they communed with her.

15 And she said unto them, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-ra-61: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me,

16 Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Ju'-dah hath read.

17 Because they have forsaken me,



and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched.

18 But unto the king of Ju'-dah, who sent you to inquire of Je-ho'-vah, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah, the God of Is'-rael: As touching the words which thou hast heard,

19 Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before

Je-ho'-vah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Je-ho'-vah.

20 Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

Golden Text.—*"I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah."* (2 Chron. 34: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 34: 14-21.

Daily Bible Readings

October	26. M.....	Book of Life (Phil. 4: 1-7)
October	27. T.....	Book of the Law (Deut. 29: 1-27)
October	28. W.....	Book of Judgment (Dan. 7: 1-10)
October	29. T.....	Book of Remembrance (Mal. 3: 1-16)
October	30. F.....	Book of Jashar (Josh. 10: 1-13)
October	31. S.....	Book of Solomon (1 Kings 4: 1-32)
November 1.	S.....	Books First Mentioned (Ex. 17: 1-14)

TIME.—622 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Josiah, Hilkiah, Shapan, Huldah, and others.

Introduction

It is always sad to watch the decline and fall of a nation; but such is the inevitable result of sinful living. This was especially true of both Judah and Israel. The end of the kingdom of Israel came during the reign of Hezekiah, and Judah went into captivity a little over twenty years after the death of Josiah, the last good ruler of the southern kingdom. It seems incredible that a nation with the history of Judah, and with God speaking to them almost continuously through the prophets, could go into complete apostasy; but that is precisely what happened.

The drift toward the fatal end of the kingdom of Judah actually began with Solomon, the man who was directly responsible for the division of the original kingdom of all Israel. And then, in spite of brief periods of respite, during the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah, one can watch the trend as it gradually falls toward the inevitable end—ruin and destruction. Practically all the good which was accomplished by the

good reign of Hezekiah, was nullified by Manasseh, his son and successor; so much so, that even the book of the law was lost in the house of Jehovah! Such were the conditions, when Josiah came to the throne; and it is well to note that his reformation was the last desperate struggle against idolatry; the good king Josiah made the last serious and arduous effort to stem the ever increasing floods of corruption, which finally overwhelmed the kingdom, and brought it to its inglorious end.

Inasmuch as the great discovery, about which we are to study today, was made during the reign of king Josiah, it will be to our advantage to note some of the chief facts regarding that monarch. Josiah was the fifteenth descendant of David to rule over the kingdom of Judah; and he was only eight years old when he came to the throne. His father Amon, the son and successor of Manasseh, was murdered; and that was why Amon's young son was crowned at such a tender age.

Josiah reigned for thirty-one years, before his untimely death at the hands of Pharaoh-neco, who was on his way to assist the king of Assyria, in his struggle against the allied forces of Media and Babylon.

King Josiah did not like the idea of the Egyptian forces crossing the great plain of Esdraelon, and he, accordingly, went out to intercept them in the valley of Megiddo, where the young king of Judah was slain. It was during the reign of Josiah, that the prophets Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah, were active; and the inspired record notes that Jeremiah was one of those who lamented the passing of Josiah. (See 2 Chron. 35: 25; cf. Jer. 22: 10; Lam. 4: 20.) Josiah was, in reality, the last independent ruler of Judah, since the four kings who followed him were mere puppets of Egypt and Babylon, as may be seen from the latter's successive conquests and deportations.

William Smith, in his *History of the Bible*, says of Josiah, "Though he fell in battle before he had completed his fortieth year, he left the brightest name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors

of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last dying glory of the earthly kingdom of David. It may, indeed, seem mysterious that a doom, so often postponed by the repentance and faith of earlier kings, should have followed so close upon the reign of the best and most zealous of them all, and that he himself should have fallen by a premature and violent death. But we must look beyond the personal character of the king to the state of the people and their rulers. We have seen that the great reform of Hezekiah was probably superficial; the apostasy under Manasseh and Amon was the last and lowest stage in the long course of national degeneracy; and the deep corruption that prevailed during the minority of Josiah is drawn in the blackest color by the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The very violence of Josiah's reformation indicates the absence of true and spontaneous sympathy among the people. In short, they were past purifying except by the fiercest fires of affliction."

### The Golden Text

Although the golden text is taken from the Book of Second Chronicles, its exact wording is found in the

principal text; and it will therefore be considered in its proper place.

### The Text Explained

#### The Book of the Law Lost and Found in God's Own House

(2 Kings 22: 8-10)

*And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of Jehovah. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.*

Bible students are not certain as to the exact identity of the book of

the law which Hilkiah found in the temple, that is, whether it was the entire five books of Moses—Genesis through Deuteronomy, also known as *The Pentateuch*, the five books of Moses, sometimes called *The Torah*; or the book of Deuteronomy alone. The majority of Bible students probably regard the latter, that is, the Book of Deuteronomy, as being the "book of the law" which Hilkiah found. The inspired record says, "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, that it may be there for a witness against

thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against Jehovah; and how much more after my death? Assemble unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands." (Deut. 31: 24-29.) This could very well have been the book which had been placed beside the ark of the covenant; but which had become lost beneath the rubbish, which had accumulated during the idolatrous days of Manasseh and Amon.

We also learn from the Book of Deuteronomy that Moses gave some instruction about what the king should do regarding "this law." "When thou art come unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me; thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother. Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; forasmuch as Jehovah hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do

them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17: 14-20.) But one has only to compare 1 Kings 10: 14-11: 3 and Neh. 13: 26 with the passage just quoted, in order to see that Solomon violated, to the letter, every prohibition which Moses enjoined. And it is safe to assume that the later kings of both Israel and Judah, for the most part, never took seriously the "book of this law"; and it was therefore very easy for them to lose it.

An object is lost, when its whereabouts are not known. I may be nearby, or far away; but if the person in question is unaware of its location, or existence, then it is lost, regardless of its location. The book of the law, although in the house of Jehovah, was lost to those who should have been interested in it, or how it came to be where it was. It is generally assumed that the book in question was lost through neglect, indifference, or outright disregard and antipathy; but that may not be entirely true. There is a possibility that some wicked king, or maybe kings, tried to destroy all the copies of the law, and that this particular copy was hidden by some faithful priest, in an effort to save it. (Cf. Adam Clarke, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, and other commentators.)

But regardless of how the book of the law came to be lost, it was of no benefit to any one, while in that state. Only when it was brought to light, and to the attention of the leaders of Judah, did it produce results in the lives of the Lord's people. When we come to apply the lesson to ourselves, it should be observed that many people have lost the word of the Lord today, even though the material book may still be in their possession. The word of the Lord is sometimes buried beneath the rubbish of creeds and practices, which are both foreign and contradictory to that which the unadulterated scriptures contain. The Bible was almost completely lost, during the dark ages, while

Rome dominated practically all religious thinking and activities; and so opposed were the leaders of that hierarchy to allowing the people to read the Bible for themselves, that one after another of those who sought to make the Scriptures available to those who might want to read and study them, were burned at the stake. The reason for the success of the sixteenth century Reformation, and the subsequent Restoration Movement, was the fact that the Bible had been given back to the people; and they could therefore read and study for themselves. Many modern-day brethren have lost the true meaning of much of the Bible, by following after false reasoning and conclusions.

The money referred to in this section of the lesson text, was the collection "which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem," for the purpose of repairing the temple; or, as it is called here, the house of Jehovah. Nothing is said regarding the length of time the money had been in the temple; the record simply says, "Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of Jehovah." And then in 2 Chronicles we read, "And the workmen that wrought in the house of Jehovah gave it to mend and repair the house: even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed." (Read 2 Chron. 34: 8-11.)

### **Josiah's Reaction to the Message of the Newly Discovered Book** (2 Kings 22: 11-13)

*And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micajah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, Go ye, inquire of Jehovah for*

*me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.*

The words which were contained in the book of the law of Jehovah, which had been brought to, and read in the presence of, the king made a profound impression upon him; and he refused to rest, until he could learn from the Lord, "concerning the words of this book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is kindled against us." This reminds us of the attitude which was displayed by Saul of Tarsus, when Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road. Saul, as soon as he discovered that it was the Lord speaking to him, asked what he should do; and when the answer was delayed, the believing penitent refused to eat or drink, until he could fulfil the Lord's requirements. (See Acts 9: 1-19.) When one realizes something of the meaning of the wrath of God, he does not delay to conform to the will of the Lord. (Cf. Heb. 10: 26-31; 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.)

Repairing the physical house of the Lord, that is, the temple, was an important work; but with the discovery of God's word, there was a greater work to do. And so, nothing more is said about the work on the building, although it doubtless continued until the repairs were finished. Buildings in which to worship and serve the Lord are indeed essential; but that kind of interest should never be allowed to crowd out obedience to the will of the Lord. The church in Laodicea is a good example of a congregation's placing the emphasis in the wrong place: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that

thou mayest see." (Rev. 3: 14-18.) There is no greater obligation, than that of listening to and complying with the word of the Lord.

When people heard the gospel message in New Testament times, they did not, if they were sincere and interested in being saved, argue about what they should do. They recognized in the word a way of escape from the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Pet. 1: 4); and they availed themselves of the very first opportunity to accept it. The word of God meant something to Josiah, and it should have a similar meaning for us. But instead of feeling that way about it now, there are people in practically every community, even professed members of the church, who seldom ever read the Bible, to say nothing of striving to learn its message for us; but there will come a time when they will long for one more chance, after it is too late. (Cf. Rev. 6: 12-17; John 12: 48-50.)

Josiah made immediate plans to send messengers to a person who could speak for God, so that he might know where they stood in the divine presence, and what they could do about it. There was no time for delay, as Josiah saw the matter, and he was right about it. And if any one will read carefully that which Moses said about the wrath of God, in such passages as Deut. 28: 15ff., he will get some idea about how the king of Judah felt, when Shaphan read from the book which Hilkiah had found in the temple. God does not want any one to be lost (cf. 1 Tim. 2: 3, 4; 2 Pet. 3: 9; Ezek. 33: 11); but he does demand that people respect him and his word.

### **Jehovah's Reply to the King through the Prophetess**

(2 Kings 22: 14-20)

*So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter); and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith*

*Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before Jehovah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.*

The five men whom the king appointed to inquire of Jehovah regarding that which was in the book of the law, which had been found in the temple, went to Huldah, a prophetess who lived in Jerusalem; and when they reached her, she had the Lord's answer ready for them. It is interesting to go through the Bible, and note the number of women who were used of the Lord to make known his will to others. (Cf. Acts 21: 8, 9.) The fact that women were used in the capacities just referred to, even in New Testament times, does not in any way contradict the specific teaching of the apostle Paul, regarding the place of authority and leadership in the Lord's church. (Cf. 1 Tim. 2: 11-14; 1 Cor. 11: 2-16.) Mary Magdalene was chosen by the Lord himself as the first witness of his resurrection from the dead. (See Mark 16: 9, 10; John 20: 1-18.) If people will read and study the Bible, for that which it says, they will have no difficulty in arriving at that which the Lord wants his people to know.

It has already been pointed out

that Jehovah, through Moses, warned the Israelites of what to expect, if they did not walk in his ways. Several hundred years had passed, since the sinful practices which were begun by Solomon, and were continued by most of the rulers and the people, generally speaking; and now the time was rapidly approaching, when the decree of Jehovah must be applied to his wayward people. Many times before, when the people showed some signs of penitence, the impending doom was delayed; but it is a noticeable fact, that no such mercy was extended to the kingdom, as such, at this time. Practically the same language is found in the Chronicles record:

"Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched." (2 Chron. 34: 23-25.)

Josiah both understood and believed the words which were written in the law of Jehovah; and he proposed to do something about it. His first move, as we have just seen, was to inquire of Jehovah; and having done that, he continued his humility before the Lord. He, apparently, had tried to do right, before the book of the law was found; and he was therefore in the proper frame of mind, and disposition of heart, to implore the Lord for mercy. And this was Jehovah's gracious word to him: "But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of Jehovah, thus shall ye say

to him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before Jehovah, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah. Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again."

These words of promise must have fallen upon the humble and grieving heart of Josiah, like a gentle rain from heaven, upon the parched ground below. Although the doom of Judah was unalterably fixed, the king resolved to do his best to bring about a reformation. "And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of Jehovah. And the king stood by the pillar, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant." (2 Kings 23: 1-3.) But if one will continue to read the record, he will learn that the hearts of the people were not in the covenant; and they did not therefore reform their lives.

## Questions for Discussion

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

### Introduction

Why is it sad to watch the decline and fall of a nation?  
Why is this especially true in the case of the kingdom of Judah?

How do you account for the tragic fate of the people of the Lord?

Discuss the progress of their decline and ultimate fall.

What are the principal facts in the life of Josiah?

In what way did he meet his death?

Give a summary of his life as a whole?

### The Book of the Law Lost and Found in God's Own House

What was the book of the law which Hilkiah found in the temple? Give reasons for your answer.

Why was a copy of the law commanded to be kept beside the ark of the covenant?

What was required of the king in this respect?

In what way did Solomon regard this law?

What effect must that have had on the kings who followed him?

In what sense was the book of the law of Jehovah lost?

In what way did it come to be lost, in all probability?

What benefit did it have for the people at that time? Give reasons for your answer.

What are some other ways in which the Bible can be lost to the people of our day?

Why don't the people who lose it consider that it is lost? Cite some examples.

What was the money referred to in the text; where did it come from; and what use was made of it?

### Josiah's Reaction to the Message of the Newly Discovered Book

What impression did the words of the

book of the law which was found make on the king?

What lesson should we get from this for our day?

Why are so many people so apparently indifferent to that which God has spoken?

In what way did the discovery of God's message have on the interest of the king in repairing the temple, that is, so far as the record is concerned?

How did people regard the message of the gospel in New Testament times?

Why should the word of God mean so much to us?

What did Josiah first resolve to do about the matter and why?

### Jehovah's Reply to the King through the Prophetess

Whom did Josiah send to inquire of Jehovah and where did they go?

What do Bible readers learn about such work by women in Bible times?

Why are they not permitted to assume places of authority and leadership in the church?

What message did the prophetess send back to the king regarding Judah and Jerusalem?

What was the special message to the king himself?

## Lesson VI—November 8, 1970

### UZZIAH'S SIN

#### Lesson Text

#### 2 Chron. 26: 8-21

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

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

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

11 Moreover ūz-ṣi'-ah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Je-i'-dī the scribe and Ma-a-se'-iah the officer, under the hand of Han-a-ni'-ah, one of the king's captains.

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

13 And under their hand was an

army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

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

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

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

17 And Az-a-ri'-ah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Je-ho'-vah, that were valiant men:

18 And they withstood ūz-ṣi'-ah the king, and said unto him, It per-

taineth not unto thee, Uz-zi'-ah, to burn incense unto Je-ho'-vah, but to the priests the sons of Aar'-ōn, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Je-ho'-vah God.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper."* (2 Chron. 26: 5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 26: 1-5.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 2. M.....	Uzziah Made King (2 Chron. 26: 1-7)
November 3. T.....	Uzziah's Activity As King (2 Chron. 26: 8-15)
November 4. W.....	Uzziah's Heart Lifted (2 Chron. 26: 16-19)
November 5. T.....	Uzziah's Punishment (2 Chron. 26: 20-23)
November 6. F.....	Blessings of Faithfulness (Rev. 22: 1-22)
November 7. S.....	A Fruitful Life (2 Tim. 4: 1-9)
November 8. S.....	Wages of Sin (Rom. 6: 20-23)

TIME.—810-759 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Uzziah, Azariah the priest, and others.

### Introduction

Uzziah was the ninth king, in the line of David, to sit upon the throne of Judah. Both his grandfather Joash, and his father Amaziah, were good kings at the beginning of their reigns; but both of them manifested an unfortunate, and an unrighteous, attitude in their later years; and both of them were murdered by their own people. The accounts of the kings of the general period we are now studying, are found in the Books of Second Kings and Second Chronicles; and these records are both parallel and Supplemental. The annals of those kings not only enable us to know something of their times and activities; but they also suggest to us many valuable lessons for our own times. It is a well known fact that human nature has been fairly constant throughout all the ages; and it is for that reason that the things which "were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15: 4.)

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

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

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

Some of the unwise and unfortunate attitudes and actions of Amaziah, Uzziah's father, had resulted in weakening the kingdom of Judah; but that was soon corrected by Uzziah, who began his reign by a successful expedition against his fath-



er's enemies; and before the tide had reached its peak, the southern kingdom was raised to a period of prosperity, which it had not known since the days of Solomon. "And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he sought Jehovah, God

made him to prosper." (2 Chron. 26: 4, 5.) We are not informed as to the identity of the Zechariah, mentioned in the quotation just made. It was during the reign of Uzziah that an earthquake, which was apparently very serious, occurred; and which was referred to by both Amos (1: 1) and Zechariah (14: 5), as a chronological epoch, and as a convulsion from which the people fled (Cf. Isa. 1: 1; 6: 1).

### The Golden Text

*"And as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper."* The term "prosper" is used in the sense of success, or bringing to a successful issue. The same word is used of Joseph, both in the house of Potiphar, and in the prison where he had been committed. "And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that Jehovah was with him, and that Jehovah made all that he did to prosper in his hand. . . . But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because Jehovah was with him; and that which he did, Jehovah made it to prosper." (Gen. 39: 2, 3, 21-23.)

The prosperity which Joseph and Uzziah enjoyed, as referred to in the passages just cited, was from the Lord; or, to say the same thing in another way, it was Jehovah who caused them to prosper. True prosperity, whether nationally or individually, in the church or out of it, is always based on righteousness; or, which is the same thing, following the moral and spiritual requirements, which have been ordained of the Lord. For one to endeavor to be prosperous, in the true meaning of that term, is, to borrow a figure from Isaiah, to try to stretch one's self upon a bed, which is too short; and to seek to cover himself with a

covering, which is too narrow for him to wrap himself in it. (See Isa. 28: 20.) This is to say that instead of seeking our own personal desires and attainments, we should learn to do justly, love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. (See Mic. 6: 6-8; cf. Matt. 22: 35-40; Tit. 2: 11, 12.)

The *Speaker's Bible* points out that "it may sometimes appear as if national greatness and prosperity were not only forwarded but actually achieved by the disregard of all moral principles and scruples, by making nothing of all truth and justice, by trampling upon every right of man and upon every sentiment of humanity. But all such apparent successes are short-lived; they build the certain causes of their own final downfall into the very foundations on which they rise for a time into power and splendor. (Cf. Eccles. 8: 9-13.) A people cannot fail in justice to other peoples, cannot wrong men and classes of men, poor men and laboring men, white men or black men, without wronging their own country, without hindering and thwarting the possibilities of real and sound progress. It was one of the ancient wise men of India who wrote: 'Justice being destroyed will destroy; being preserved will preserve; it must, therefore, never be violated.' " But it was an inspired man who, speaking for Jehovah, said, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." (Isa. 48: 18.) Prosperity, as the Bible defines the term, is not possible apart from God.

## The Text Explained

### Jerusalem Fortified and the Country Developed

(2 Chron. 26: 8-10)

*And the Ammonites gave tribute to Uzziah; and his name spread abroad even to the entrance of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding strong. Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the turning of the wall, and fortified them. And he built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle; in the lowland also, and in the plain: and he had husbandmen and vinedressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry.*

If one will read the chapter, immediately preceding the one from which the lesson text is taken, he can easily see that the reign of Uzziah, was in marked contrast with that of his father Amaziah. Uzziah, in fact, was one of the ablest monarchs who ruled over Judah. The inspired historian notes that "he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities in the country of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim." (See 2 Chron. 26: 6, 7.) The places referred to in the passage just quoted, were south and southwest of Judah; while the Ammonites, whom Uzziah forced to pay tribute to him, were east of the Jordan.

The first eight verses of the chapter, from which the lesson text is taken, give some idea of the tremendous influence which Uzziah had on the heathen nations about him; and it should be noted that his name, which was known even to the entrance of Egypt, was a good name. He was making an effort to do God's will, and God was helping him. This is another example of Jehovah's making the enemies of a man who pleases him, to be at peace with him. (See Prov. 16: 7; cf. 2 Chron. 17: 10; Rom. 8: 28.) This was especially true during Old Testament times, when Jehovah used nations to chastize other peoples. (Cf. Isa. 10: 5-11; Hab. 1: 2ff.) The

presence of heathen nations in the land of Canaan, was due to the sinfulness of God's chosen people (cf. Josh. 15: 63; Deut. 9: 1-5; Josh. 23: 1-13); and so, when a king like Uzziah sought after Jehovah, the heathen nations about him were brought under subjection to the Lord's people.

Uzziah knew that his home-front needed to be made stronger. He sought the will of the Lord, but he tried to do his part too. The reason for the weakened condition of Jerusalem and Judah, is stated in these words: "But Amaziah would not hear; for it was of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought after the gods of Edom. So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to Judah. And Judah was put to the worst before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent. And Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obbedom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria." (2 Chron. 25: 20-24.)

The reason for this encounter between the kings of Israel and Judah, was due to the irresponsible advice which Amaziah apparently asked for and received, because of the pride which filled his heart at that time. Joash the king of Israel tried in vain to prevent the confrontation, first with a parable, and then with these words: "Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten Edom; and thy heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle [*provoke calamity*, margin] to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?" (Read 2 Chron. 25: 17-19.) Some people cannot be told anything, when they think more highly of themselves, than they should; but

they will eventually get the message.

But Uzziah, in seeking to repair the damage which his father had caused, did not stop with making his capital city strong; he fortified the countryside too. This was done to protect the people who lived in those sections of the kingdom, along with their livestock, crops, and vineyards. The king himself took great interest in cattle-raising and farming; and that, in all probability, encouraged the people generally to do likewise. Uzziah did not delight in wars; nor did he spend the major portion of his time in sports and other forms of pleasure. Instead, he loved the honorable calling of husbandry, which was not only profitable to him; but also enabled both himself and his people to live better.

### An Account of Uzziah's Military Might

(2 Chron. 26: 11-15)

*Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their reckoning made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. The whole number of the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty men of valor, was two thousand and six hundred. And under their hand was an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears, and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, wherewith to shoot arrows and great stones. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.*

The "army of fighting men" indicates that they were well trained, for the work which they were expected to do. There were twenty-six hundred officers, and three hundred and seven thousand and five hundred men, who were able to wage war with mighty power. These leaders helped Uzziah against

the enemy; and it is well to note that the king saw to it, that they were well trained and equipped for their mission. This is the first time, in the annals of history, where mention is made of machines, equipped for throwing projectiles; and it is altogether probable that they were invented and produced, for the first time, during the reign of Uzziah. The soldiers of Uzziah did not go out against their enemies, as a united army; instead, they engaged in guerrilla warfare; and that, apparently, only as needed to "help the king against the enemy."

War, as such, has never been pleasing to God; but as long as men lust for that which they do not have, and are jealous of each other, wars will have to be fought. The kingdoms of Israel, during the Mosaic dispensation, and Judah, after the division of the original kingdom, were frequently used by Jehovah to punish wicked nations; but when the kingdom of Christ was established, that situation changed. Isaiah, in speaking of the spiritual kingdom, says, "And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2: 4.) This kind of situation, of course, can prevail, only as people turn to the Lord, and his way of life. But God still rules in the nations of the world (cf. Dan. 4: 17; Acts 17: 26; Rom. 13: 1-7); and as long as men seek to have their own ways, there will be wars and rumors of wars. (Cf. Matt. 24: 6; James 4: 1, 2.) It is nothing short of appalling, to think of the invention and production of war machines, from the days of Uzziah until now.

### "But When He Was Strong, . .

(2 Chron. 26: 16-21)

*But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king,*

and said unto him, *It pertaineth not unto thee, Uziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God. Then Uziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. And Uziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.*

The attitude which Uziah maintained, and the action which grew out of it, furnish an impressive illustration of the oft-repeated words of Solomon, namely,

"Pride goeth before destruction,  
And a haughty spirit before a fall."  
(Prov. 16: 18.)

Worldly prosperity is often the forerunner of daring impiety. It has already been pointed out that Uziah was a good king, and this is the only blot against his name; but it was a transgression, the like of which was laid to the account of no other monarch who ruled over the Lord's people. Several of the other kings of Judah were guilty of such heinous crimes as adultery, oppression, murder, persecution, and idolatry; but none of these was charged against Uziah. But the sin which this ruler of Judah did commit, was so terrible, as to result in his being isolated to a life of separation and loneliness, and lingering punishment, to the day of his death.

Uziah was neither the first man, nor the last, to be destroyed by success. It is not unusual for the man of great ability to think and act, as if all his accomplishments were due to his own talents and initiatives. Every person who enjoys any de-

gree of success, should always be on guard against the temptation to ascribe to himself that which he may have achieved. (Cf. Luke 12: 16-21.) Self-esteem is always a deadly menace to a character which is acceptable to right-thinking people, to say nothing of the Lord. The fault which we are now discussing may take many forms, as, for example, the capable official first becomes efficient, then dictatorial, and on to the point where he becomes unable to see that there might be a better way, than the course which he is following. Such a person would do well to read often the words of Paul. (See 1 Cor. 10: 12; 13: 1-13.)

The sin which Uziah committed was that of presumption, which David calls the *great transgression*: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be clear from great transgression." (Psalm 19:

13.) One is led to wonder, as he meditates on the action of Uziah, now under consideration, if he still had the benefit of the wise counsel of Zechariah (verse 5); but it is certain that if he did, he had grown too proud to listen to it. Nothing is said in the text, which ascribes any specific motive for the daring and impious act of the king, further than his pride: "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly."

It is interesting, as well as helpful, to note the number of barriers, which Uziah had to break through, in order to commit the crime which was charged against him. (1) He had to disregard the direct command of Jehovah, regarding temple worship, which permitted only the consecrated priests to offer such sacrifices. (2) He had to refuse to listen to the men, who were divinely authorized to remonstrate with such offenders. (3) He had to disregard, and despise, the entire history of his people. (4) He had to defy God, whose name he bore, and who had placed him upon the throne of Judah. The principle involved in the incident now before us, is the same one which the writer of Hebrews uses, when he emphasizes the seriousness of forsaking the assembly of the saints in Christ:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 26-31.)

The passage just quoted was the writer's answer to those who disregarded his exhortations in the preceding verses, especially verse 25. The barriers listed above should have kept Uzziah from his great sin; and the writer of the passage quoted above, names three barriers, in verse 29, which should keep professed Christians from the wilful sin of forsaking of the assembly of the Lord's people. Eighty-one priests were unable to persuade Uzziah to restrain himself from violating God's law, regarding the burning of incense upon the altar of incense; and it appears that no number of faithful teachers of God's word today, can prevent many who call themselves Christians, from forsaking the assembly which has been ordained by the Lord for his people.

It should also be observed that Uzziah was not the last man who became angry with those who were sincerely trying to get him to respect the law of the Lord; the practice, as any thoughtful observer knows, is still very common today. Even a wicked man like Felix, did not become angry with Paul for

condemning his sinful life. Luke says, "But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." (Acts 24: 24, 25.) The Lord, of course, does not strike people with leprosy, or other physical ills (cf. Acts 5: 1-11), when they disobey him today; but we should learn from the examples which are recorded in the Bible, something of his attitude toward such things. The punishment which awaits the violations, and even neglect, of the things ordained for Christians, is far worse than leprosy or physical death.

The lesson which we have been studying is an inspired record of Jehovah's resisting the proud, and his jealousy for the purity and honor of his own laws and institutions; and by it he gives fair warning to all men, both great and small, to keep their distance and show the proper respect for the things about which he has spoken. Uzziah's punishment was a loud and prolonged call to repentance; and it is very probable that he gave heed to it. He had been a man of business, and he had a love for it; but he was never again permitted to engage in it. Even his son had to direct the affairs of the king's house, and judge the people of the land; for Uzziah had to dwell in a separate house. (Cf. Num. 12: 9-15.) It appears from the chronology which we have, that Uzziah lived his lonely life for several years; and, even in death, he was not united with his family; for he was buried in the field of the kings, rather than in the royal sepulchres. (See 2 Chron. 26: 22, 23; Rom. 6: 23.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

Give something of the background of Uzziah, as he came to the throne.

In what way did he begin his reign and

with what kind of influence was he surrounded?

### The Golden Text

What is the fundamental meaning of "prosper," as used in this text?

What is always essential for true prosperity?

What mistaken idea do many people have regarding such matters?

#### Jerusalem Fortified and the Country Developed

How did the beginning of the reign of Uzziah compare with that of his father?

Discuss the influence which Uzziah exercised over the nations around him.

Why was it possible for him to have such influence over those about him?

In what way did Uzziah strengthen his home-front?

Why was the country of Judah in such a weakened condition?

Why was the king of Israel able to defeat Amaziah the king of Judah?

Discuss the manner in which Uzziah sought to repair the damage caused by his father.

#### An Account of Uzziah's Military Might

What was the size of the fighting army which Uzziah had?

How many trained leaders did he have?

In what way was the army equipped?

What new item of carnal warfare was introduced during Uzziah's reign?

How has that phase of carnal warfare grown through the years?

Why is warfare so general among the nations of the earth?

Why doesn't the Lord use his people today in such efforts?

How do we know that God still rules in the kingdoms of the world? Discuss fully.

#### "But When He Was Strong"

What aspect of character did Uzziah manifest at the time of this section of the lesson text?

Why did such a change come over him?

What important lesson is suggested by his attitude and conduct?

What can you say regarding the seriousness of his daring act of impiety?

In what way was he like many other people both before and since his time?

How did David speak of the type of sin which Uzziah committed?

What were some of the barriers which he had to break before committing his daring sin?

In what way is the principle which underlay his action applicable to our day?

What barriers to such conduct is mentioned by the writer of Hebrews?

What is the over-all lesson which we should get from this study?

### Lesson VII—November 15, 1970

## ISAIAH WARNS JUDAH

### Lesson Text

Isa. 1: 1-9, 16-20

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

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Je-ho'-vah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

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

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

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

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

7 Your country is desolate; your

cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

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

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

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

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

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith Je-ho'-vah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Je-ho'-vah hath spoken it.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you."* (Isa. 1: 15.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 14: 21-26.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 9. M..... Isaiah's Prophecy (Isa. 1: 1-10)
- November 10. T..... Hypocrisy Condemned (Isa. 1: 11-17)
- November 11. W..... "Let Us Reason Together" (Isa. 1: 18-23)
- November 12. T..... Kingdom to Be Established (Isa. 2: 1-5)
- November 13. F..... Israel's Idolatry (Isa. 2: 12-22)
- November 14. S..... Wicked Rulers (Isa. 3: 1-12)
- November 15. S..... Isaiah's Vision and Commission (Isa. 6: 1-10)

TIME.—Probably about 740 B.C.  
PLACE.—Jerusalem.  
PERSONS.—Isaiah and Jehovah's sinful people.

Introduction

A warning is intended to put one on guard against a possible, or an approaching real danger; and the wise person will give heed to such admonitions. The writer of Hebrews says, "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.) This passage shows something of the spirit in which a warning, and especially a warning from the Lord, should be regarding; as well as the rewards which come to those who listen to that which God has spoken. Jesus himself speaks about this question in these words: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12: 4, 5.)

The nineteenth psalm was written by David. In the first six verses, he speaks of the works of nature, sometimes referred to as God's other book; and then, beginning with verse 7 and on to the close of the psalm, he devotes attention to the word of God. After employing six terms to describe the word of the Lord, namely, law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, and ordinances, the sweet singer of Israel goes on to say,

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold;

Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them thy servant is warned:  
In keeping them there is great reward."

After Jehoshaphat's rebuke for his alliance with the wicked Ahab, he apparently made an unusual effort to get the people to be more diligent in their efforts to serve Jehovah; and among other things, he said, "And whosoever any controversy shall come to you from your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances, ye shall warn them, that they be not guilty towards Jehovah, and so wrath come upon you and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not be guilty." (2 Chron. 19: 10; read also chapters 18 and 19.)

A concrete example of that which Jehovah means by warnings, is found in the Book of Ezekiel: "And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. . . . And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand, Yet if thou warn the

wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and

his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul." (Ezek. 3: 4, 16-21; cf. 33: 1-9; Heb. 2: 1-3; 12: 25-26.)

### The Golden Text

*"When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you."* The words just quoted are taken from the passage between the two portions of Isaiah 1, which comprise the text for today's lesson; and it should be read at this time: for it explains why Jehovah refused to hear their prayers. "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." (Isa. 1: 10-15; cf. Mic. 3:1-4; 6: 6-8.)

The Lord has made it plain throughout the Bible that he will not hear the prayers of his people who turn themselves away from his will. Solomon wrote, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28: 9.) One of the

psalmists, whose works have been preserved for us, said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear: but verily God hath heard; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his lovingkindness from me." (Psalm 66: 18-20.) God is gracious toward his children, who would be doomed without him; and he expects them to manifest a gracious attitude toward those who may be less fortunate than they. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry, but shall not be heard." (Prov. 21: 13; cf. 1 John 3: 13-18.)

If, on the other hand, the Lord's people are sincere in their efforts to please God, and are guided by the truth as they endeavor to live according to his will; they can call upon him regarding anything which concerns them, with the assurance that their prayers will be heard. Although in a Roman prison when he wrote, the apostle Paul exhorted his beloved brethren in Philippi to continue in prayer: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4: 4-7; cf. 1 John 3: 21, 22; 5: 14, 15; John 15: 7; Matt. 21: 22.)

### The Text Explained

**The Reason for Isaiah's Warning:  
Israel's Ingratitude**  
(Isa. 1: 1-9)

*The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning*

*Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.* It is easy to see from this superscription, that the prophetic ministry of Isaiah



continued over a long period of time; but this does not necessarily mean that he was actively engaged in such work, during all the period indicated. It appears from Isa. 6: 1ff, that the prophet probably began his work near the close of the long reign of Uzziah (fifty-two years, including the regencies at the beginning and the end of his reign), or about 740 B.C., and continued at least through the major part of the reign of Hezekiah. Jotham and Ahaz each ruled sixteen years, or a total of thirty-two years (2 Kings 15: 32, 33; 16: 1, 2); and we know that Isaiah was active during the time when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, made a vain attempt to overthrow Jerusalem.

The historical record in both 2 Kings (18: 13) and Isaiah (36: 1) states that Sennacherib's invasion into Judah took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah; but some Bible students are of the opinion that the numerals are not accurate in the present Hebrew text. (See Jamieson, *in loco*; and the Bible *Dictionary* in the American Standard Version of the Bible.) It may be that the view just referred to may have some merit, since Sennacherib did not ascend the throne of Assyria, until 704 B.C., while the invasion, mentioned above, was apparently in 701 B.C., which was only a few years before the end of Hezekiah's reign—not less than two years, nor more than four. Hezekiah's entire reign was for a period of twenty-nine years. (2 Kings 18: 1, 2; read also 18: 13ff.)

If that which has just been said regarding Sennacherib's ill-fated attempt to overthrow Jerusalem is correct, then the ministry of Isaiah lasted for a period of more than fifty years. The record of his public life is largely a history of the political movements of his day. It appears that Isaiah belonged to the upper class of society; and was an aristocrat, both in spirit and in deed. He sat close to the helm of state, and made direct efforts to influence both domestic and foreign policy, solely by the mighty word of prophecy. (It should be kept in mind that the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were theocratic in their nature and administration.) Isaiah moved like a

prince among men; and spoke with the dignity and moral authority, which befitted an ambassador of the Most High. We have no direct information regarding the last years of Isaiah's life; but some have thought that he was "sawn asunder" (cf. Heb. 11: 37), during the reign of Hezekiah's son Manasseh. (Cf. 2 Kings 21: 16.)

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward. Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

Although the wrath of Jehovah will be expressed time and again, throughout the prophecy of Isaiah, it is worthy of notice that the very first picture in the book which bears his name, is that of a loving heavenly Father, who is deeply grieved because of the sins of his people. However, it is Jehovah as the Father of a nation, rather than that of an individual. It remained for Jesus to reveal the Fatherhood of God, respecting the individual, which he did during his public ministry; and confirmed it by his death, burial, and resurrection.

One of the principal features of

the Bible is that of the wounded love of God, the picture and description of which may be seen on practically any page of his revelation to the human race. The indifference which men manifest toward God is beyond our ability to understand. Even the dumb animals have more consideration for their masters, than God's people do for him; and Isaiah, in the passage now before us, is in effect calling upon heaven and earth to witness this great tragedy. One has only to read the Bible, in order to see that such an attitude, as Isaiah here describes, has characterized the human race, since the day of the great transgression in the garden of Eden. (Cf. Jer. 8: 7.)

Verses 4 through 6 present a terrible picture of sin, as it manifests itself in people; and while we should not overlook its total effects in the lives of those who should have been free from its clutches, it appears quite probably that the reference in the passage, was not so much to the sins of the people as such, but rather to the universality of their punishment. Their sins, of course, brought on their punishment, and it was essential that they be itemized, in order to signify the punishment which was theirs, because of them.

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

The devastations of the invading enemies were almost as terrible then, as they are now, especially if the armies were those of the Assyrians. J. H. Morrison, in speaking of this mighty scourge of the nations,

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

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

### The Divine Exhortation

(Isa. 1: 16, 17)

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

The divine exhortation, in this section of the lesson text, is as tender

and warmhearted, as the denunciation in the previous section was pointed and devastating. The aim of the message, as delivered by Isaiah, was to tell people how to get right with God, and with their fellow man; for no one can be right with God, who is not right with his fellow man. (Cf. Matt. 5: 21-26.) The only kind of worship and service which God seeks, and will accept, from man, is that which is characterized by purity of heart, and which in faith seek to be just, holy, and unselfish, according to the character and will of the Lord. What we are must be in keeping with what we say and do; or, to say the same thing in another way, our character and conduct must be in harmony with the faith we proclaim, or we will be guilty of maintaining a religion which is both meaningless and unrelated to life. It is the business of the Lord's people to make known the Lord to the world, along with his love which makes the salvation of all men possible; and this can be successfully done, only as Christian people use the means—worship, evangelization, and service—which are available to them, and commanded of them.

While the exhortations of Isaiah, in the section of the lesson text now before us, were addressed to the nation of Israel, as such; it is equally true that their implementation had a personal application, too. This principle is especially true when we come to consider the Lord's people today. No one can worship and serve God acceptably, while at the same time manifesting an unrighteous attitude toward his fellow men, either inside the church or out of it. How can professed Christian people hope to win others to Christ, while treating them with unfairness and unkindness; and how can they promote fellowship among their brethren, if they carry into their church relationship a spirit of anger, revenge, and greed? Jesus has spoken with unmistakable clearness regarding this subject, as we saw in the passage referred to in the preceding paragraph, in which he says that even the worship which one expects to give God must be delayed, until the sin which disrupts fellowship has been cleared away.

### The Alternative: Repent or Be Destroyed

(Isa. 1: 18-20)

*Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.*

Some one has noted that perhaps more sermons have been preached on verse 18, of the passage just quoted, than on any other passage in the Old Testament; but it should also be observed that in most instances the emphasis has been on the unconditional assurance of forgiveness. However, it is a fact, capable of being demonstrated, that nowhere in the Old Testament is salvation from sin offered unconditionally; and what is true of that part of God's revelation as a whole is also true of the passage in question, as may be seen by reading the verse in the light of its context. The Interpreter's Bible points out that even the New Testament, with the cross of Christ as its message, does not declare unconditional forgiveness. The assurance of mercy must always be preceded by the penitent's cry for mercy, along with the obedience which is essential to demonstrate his faith in the Lord's revealed plan for saving the lost.

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

But people who reason, as that term is generally understood, completely overlook the fact that the in-

vation to "reason," as set forth in the text now before us, comes directly from God himself; and is not therefore the result of man's own desires in the matter. Any one who reads the New Testament aright, knows that the religion of Christ, that is, Christianity, claims the whole of its adherents; or, which is the same thing, the whole body, soul, mind, and spirit, must respond to the call and direction of the gospel which calls them into the fellowship and service of the Lord. This is made certain by Christ himself, when he says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." (Luke 10: 27.) The mind is the seat of the reason, and when the four "alls" of the passage just quoted are brought into subjection to God, the result is a completely balanced person. There are too many people who use the term "reason" in a very loose manner. For example, when they say that some Bible teaching is contrary to reason,

they mean little more than that it is contrary to their opinion.

The word "reason," as used in the text now before us, is found more than fifty times in the Old Testament, and its meaning here is to determine that which is essential to justification; or, to state the same thing in another way, if they will open their minds to God, he will tell them what to do in order to get themselves right with him. This process would enable them to see themselves, as they really are; and they would then be in both the mood and inclination to accept God's terms of forgiveness, and thereby get themselves right with him. But if they chose to continue in their rebellious ways, inevitable destruction awaited them. Thus, when people "reason" with the Lord, that is, in conjunction with him; or, which is the same thing, if they will open their minds to him, they will always see the wisdom of doing that which he commands. The same principle is true today.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What is a "warning" and its purpose?  
Cite some examples.  
Why are warnings so essential?  
How does God warn his people?

#### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances were the words of this text spoken?  
What has God said about his hearing, or not hearing, prayers?  
Why should the Lord's people always want to pray to their heavenly Father?

#### The Reason for Isaiah's Warning: Israel's Ingratitude

When, and for approximately how long did Isaiah prophesy?  
What kind of influence did he exert and upon whom?  
Why was Isaiah such a powerful proclaimer of God's word?  
Discuss the first picture which he sets forth in the book which bears his name.  
What does the Bible have to say regarding the "wounded love" of God?  
How can mankind be so ungrateful to God?  
What does the text now before us say regarding sin and its punishment?  
Discuss freely.  
Why were the people of Isaiah's day willing to suffer so much in sin?

What were some of the things which they were compelled to suffer while rebelling against God?

What lesson is there in all of this for us?

In what scene did Isaiah picture Jerusalem?

#### The Divine Exhortation

What is the nature and purpose of this exhortation?  
What kind of worship and service does God seek and accept from his people?  
What does this teach and imply regarding their character and conduct.  
What does the New Testament teach regarding individual responsibility?  
Why must the Lord's people always seek to be on proper terms with their fellow men?  
What does Jesus teach regarding this?

#### The Alternative: Repent or Be Destroyed

What frequent use has been made of verse 18?  
What do many preachers emphasize regarding it, or rather attempt to emphasize?  
What does the entire Bible teach regarding the matter of forgiveness of sins?  
Why must forgiveness always be conditional?  
What mistaken idea do many people have regarding the place of "reason" in their lives?  
What does the Bible teach regarding those who accept the gospel of Christ?  
What is the meaning of "reason," as used in the text now before us?

Lesson VIII—November 22, 1970

JEREMIAH'S TRIALS

Lesson Text

Jer. 26: 7-19

7 And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jer-e-mi'-ah speaking these words in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

8 And it came to pass, when Jer-e-mi'-ah had made an end of speaking all that Je-ho'-vah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Je-ho'-vah, saying, This house shall be like Shi'-loh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jer-e-mi'-ah in the house of Je-ho'-vah.

10 And when the princes of Ju'-dah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Je-ho'-vah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Je-ho'-vah's house.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 Then spake Jer-e-mi'-ah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Je-ho'-vah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice

of Je-ho'-vah your God; and Je-ho'-vah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes.

15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Je-ho'-vah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Je-ho'-vah our God.

17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

18 Mi-cah the Mo'-rash-tite prophesied in the days of Hez-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah; and he spake to all the people of Ju'-dah, saying, Thus saith Je-ho'-vah of hosts: Zi'-on shall be plowed as a field, and Je-ru'-sa-lem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

19 Did Hez-e-ki'-ah king of Ju'-dah and all Ju'-dah put him to death? did he not fear Je-ho'-vah, and entreat the favor of Je-ho'-vah, and Je-ho'-vah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The word of our God shall stand forever."* (Isa. 40: 8.)  
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 36: 20-32.

Daily Bible Readings

- November 16. M..... Jeremiah's Warning (Jer. 26: 1-7)
- November 17. T.....The Babylonian Crisis (Jer. 27: 8-16)
- November 18. W..... Influence of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 23: 1-14)
- November 19. T.....Jeremiah's Concern (Jer. 15: 5-10)
- November 20. F.....Persecution Inevitable (Matt. 5: 10-12)
- November 21. S.....God Our Refuge (Psalm 94: 12-23)
- November 22. S.....Jehovah Delivers His People (Psalm 37: 3-40)

TIME.—About 609 B.C.  
PLACE.—Jerusalem.  
PERSONS.—Jeremiah, priests, prophets, princes, elders, and the people.

## Introduction

The Book of Jeremiah is the longest prophetic record in the Old Testament. Many valuable lessons for our time may be gained from it, if one is willing to study it carefully. There is much to be said regarding the book as a whole, but our chief interest just now is with reference to the prophet himself. The character of Jeremiah may be described as gentle and trustful; and if one will read the account of his times, he will have no difficulty in seeing that the prophet was no match, humanly speaking, for the secret treachery and open violence, which he frequently encountered. This kind of opposition was too great for Jeremiah to deal with by his own unaided powers; but he was not alone. Throughout his long ministry of forty years (626-586 B.C.), the prophet from Anathoth in Benjamin (Jer. 1: 1), faced his foes with the kind of courage which triumphs over the natural man, rebuked his people with relentless severity, and contradicted their most cherished prejudices. There is no wrath so terrible as the "wrath of the Lamb," but the wrath which Jeremiah displayed was akin to it. This great prophet left a mark on his generation which no human being can ever erase.

But looking at Jeremiah from our vantage point, we must make some allowances for some of his attitudes and actions. We would like to think, for example, that he always endured his persecutions with meekness, patience, and forgiveness; but as we think of him in his day, it is not surprising to hear him bemoan his hard lot, or even curse the day of his birth. (Cf. Job 3:

Iff.) Many a Christian man in moments of despair, has wished that he had never been born. Therefore, when Jeremiah challenged the justice of Jehovah's government, or even complained that he had been deceived and deluded, we can sympathize with his human weakness and weariness, which caused him, for the moment, to lose his hold on God, and sink exhausted and hopelessly, from his point of view. (Read Jer. 15: 10; 20: 7-18.)

But when we hear Jeremiah utter bitter curses against his persecutors, and passionately implore Jehovah's vengeance upon them (see Jer. 18: 19-23), we are startled and horror-stricken. However, after taking a closer look at his words, and the circumstances under which they were spoken, we come to the conclusion that in spite of the personal vindictiveness, which was mingled with these imprecations, there was a far deeper meaning in them. And so, looking at the matter from the human point of view, we can feel that however imperfect may have been the prophet's way of expressing his feelings, his principal aim was to express his desire for the triumph of righteousness; or, which is the same thing, for the manifestation of God's will and way in the world. We must keep in mind the fact that Jeremiah keenly felt that his cause was God's cause, and that his enemies were also God's enemies; and that since God's honor was at stake, it was the prophet's duty to defend and vindicate it, while at the same time to demonstrate that his opponents were utterly in the wrong.

## The Golden Text

*"The word of our God shall stand forever."* The words just quoted form the closing part of a short paragraph by Isaiah, which contains a very familiar passage, namely, "The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people

is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever." (Isa. 40: 6-8.) Peter identifies this word as the gospel of Christ. "For, All the flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth, and the flower falleth:

But the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you." (1 Pet. 1: 24, 25.)

The original, that is, the immediate and historical, purpose of the words which Isaiah spoke, was evidently to reassure the Jews of the captivity. The message was to men who were looking upon the magnificence and power of Babylon, but the prophet spoke of another land, and of an earlier age. The exiles were doubtless awed by the imposing fabric of the great empire; but that was as nothing, when compared with the power and authority of God's word. The vision of Isaiah therefore went far beyond the narrow boundaries of personal life, and the experiences of that day. There is an everlasting contrast between that which the world has to offer, even by the greatest of nations, and the eternal word and will of God.

The people of the Lord were in Babylon at the time Isaiah spoke the word of the text now before us, and they had been crushed into silent submission; but God wanted them to know that he had not forgotten them. Some one has pointed out

that there is nothing more astonishing, than the way in which those feeble captives, belonging to a despised race, confronted the empires of their days, with all their proud and ancient civilization. This was made possible, of course, by the power of Jehovah. God's message to Jeremiah, about a hundred years later, was this: "Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build up and to plant." (Jer. 1: 8-10.) God's word therefore will outlast all mankind, and will eventually vanquish all the glory of the race, wherein it disputed his claim; but it will do more than that, it will save all who are willing to conform to its everlasting message. When the angel spoke to Mary, he said, in Luke 1: 37, "For no word from God shall be void of power."

## The Text Explained

### The Reaction to Jeremiah's

#### Preaching: (Jer. 26: 7-9)

*And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Jehovah.*

As long as people are not in sympathy with the word and will of God, there will always be opposition to its proclamation. (Cf. John 7: 17, where Jesus makes sympathy with that which God says a condition to understanding it. See also Matt. 11: 25-27; Acts 16: 14; Phil. 3: 15.) Jeremiah was Jehovah's prophet, that is, spokesman, and he was in Jehovah's house and speaking God's message. All of this showed both courage and devotion on the part of Jeremiah; and it was reasonable and right for him to rely upon the overruling providence with respect to the outcome, notwithstanding the fact that the prophet sometimes wavered in his trust in God, as we have already seen. The work of a prophet in Old Testament times was comparable to that of a

gospel preacher today; and we may be sure that the principles which applied to the prophets of that age, are also applicable to the preachers of our time, as may be seen by reading the following two paragraphs.

"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, came this word from Jehovah, saying. Thus saith Jehovah: Stand in the court of Jehovah's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in Jehovah's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word. It may be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way; that I may repent me of the evil which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah: If ye will not hearken unto me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send unto you, even rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; then will I make

this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." (Jer. 26: 1-6.)

"I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.) There is no substitute for the preaching of the plain, simple, and unadulterated word of God. "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4: 12, 13.)

*And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.*

There is no indication, so far as the record goes, that any who heard Jeremiah's address on the occasion now under consideration, interrupted him: they apparently allowed him to finish that which he had to say; but it is certain that the people for whom the words were intended, had no sympathy for them. When people are determined to have their own way, the word of the Lord has no interest for them. This has been the sad story throughout the entire history of God's dealings with the human race. "And Jesus an-

swered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that are bidden, Behold, I have made ready my dinner; my oxen and my failings are killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage feast. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hold on his servants, and treated them shamefully, and killed them." (Matt. 22: 1-6.)

When any one claims to be speaking the word of the Lord, the least that those to whom the message is addressed should do, is to listen respectfully; and then search the scriptures, in an effort to see whether or not that which has been spoken, is in harmony with God's revealed will. When Paul and his companions tried to tell the people in Thessalonica about Jesus, and his plan for their salvation, "the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people. And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things." (Read Acts 17: 1-9.)

Thus, the Jews of Thessalonica not only refused to hear the word of the Lord themselves; they saw to it that no one else listened to the gospel of Christ. Their action in taking certain brethren to the rulers resulted in the immediate departure of Paul and Silas from the city. Their next stop was in Beroea, where they entered into the synagogue of the Jews. "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that



they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few." (See Acts 17: 10-12.)

Any person with reasonable intelligence can easily determine whether or not that which is preached is the word of the Lord; but alas! how few make the effort to learn the truth of the matter. A gospel preacher may quote Mark 16:

15, 16; Acts 2: 37-39; and other passages of like import; but the majority of religious people today will register their opposition to such preaching. But that is not all: There are people today who are members of the New Testament church, or at least they think they are, who are as much opposed to some scriptures which apply to them as the denominational world is to the ones just cited; and any one who has had any experience at all, or who has made any observations, knows that gospel preachers are frequently forced to move on, because they dared to proclaim the whole truth regarding Christian living.

#### **The Charge Against, and the Defense of, Jeremiah** (Jer. 26: 10-15)

*And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know for certain that, if ye put me to death,*

*ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.*

The princes who came from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah were the judges who presided over the trial of Jeremiah. It is altogether probable that they were not in complete sympathy with Jeremiah; but they did, as we shall see further on, manifest a sense of fairness and justice. The charge which the priests and the prophets, and all the people, placed against Jeremiah was that he had prophesied against the house of the Lord, and against the city of Jerusalem, and there was no question regarding the accuracy of the charge; for the prophet freely admitted as much. But, as Jehovah's servants usually do, Jeremiah made it plain that his sole purpose was to do them good, or, which is the same thing, to get them to act, so that God's wrath would be turned away from them. His only defense was that Jehovah had commanded him to deliver the message. He then placed himself at the mercy of his judges, but warned them of the consequences which would come upon them, if they put him to death.

Those who are familiar with the life of Paul are aware of the fact that when he was brought to trial for preaching the gospel, he seldom, if ever, tried to defend himself personally. Instead, he usually wound up by preaching a gospel sermon to his opponents. When gospel preachers, and teachers of the truth, are sure that they are obeying God in proclaiming their message, they have a moral stamina which cannot be overthrown. The defense which Jeremiah made may be regarded as one of the great pivotal moments in man's fight for freedom. Just as Joshua stood before the tribes of Israel, Paul before Agrippa, Socrates before the Athenians, and Luther before the Diet of Worms, so Jeremiah stood before his accusers in Jerusalem.

It is worthy of notice that Jeremiah did not make any counter charges against his opponents. He boldly called upon them to amend their ways; but he made it plain

that that was for their own good, and for the glory of God. People may sometimes wonder why the Lord permits his people to suffer for that which he commands them to do; but if they will only stop and think, they will be able to see that such is necessary, in order to allow the opponents of the truth to make out their own case.

People will face the Lord in judgment at the last day, who would hotly deny that they would have said and done certain things, if they had been kept from saying and doing them; but, having said and done them, they can no longer deny the fact, and will, of course, be dealt and accordingly. It is doubtless for this reason, along with others, that good people are often persecuted; they are simply the victims of evil-minded people, who are allowed to have their own way, and who, when the great harvest-time comes, will reap that which they sowed. It is never God's will to work evil toward his people; and that is another reason why he sends his preachers and teachers to those who are in rebellion against him. If such people will only turn back to him, he will forgive them, and treat them as if they had never sinned. (Cf. Luke 15: 11-24.)

### **The Verdict Regarding Jeremiah and Some Supporting Evidence** (Jer. 26: 16-19)

*Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets: This man is not worthy of death; for he hath spoken to us in the name of Jehovah our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morashite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah, and Jehovah repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should we commit great evil against our own souls.*

Regardless of how the princes and the people felt toward Jeremiah personally, they certainly saw that the prophet was only doing that which Jehovah had commanded him to do; and he was therefore not a criminal who should not be allowed to live any longer. The concluding paragraph of the chapter, from which the lesson text for today's study is taken, verses 20-24, tells of another prophet who prophesied in the name of Jehovah "against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah," who incurred the wrath of the king. "And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and he fled, and went into Egypt. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him, into Egypt; and they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."

We are not told why Uriah was put to death, and Jeremiah spared, while prophesying the same thing; but there may be a hint in the closing verse of the chapter. Ahikam was a trusted servant in the reign of Josiah (cf. 2 Kings 22: 12-14); and it is quite possible that he still exercised great influence among the princes, during the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah. At any rate, it was through the influence of Ahikam that Jeremiah escaped death at the time of this lesson; and it was doubtless in keeping with divine providence. God may have had other work which he wanted the prophet to do.

The argument of the elders regarding the prophecy of Micah was both logical and effective. Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and he uttered his prophecy about one hundred years before the time of Jeremiah. The earlier prophet's

words are found in Mic. 3: 12. Jeremiah seldom uttered a warning against his people, without at the same time showing them how the impending danger could be avoided; and with this fact before them, along with Hezekiah's response to Micah's prediction, there was no reason whatsoever for their putting Jeremiah to death. Genuine repentance is the certain way to God's mercy. When the path of repentance is once entered, as some one has observed, the sinner is surprised to find how easy and pleasant it is. One may imagine that it is a peril-

ous ascent to where the storm-winds rage unceasingly; a sharp, cruel road strewn with branching thorns, and filled with stones like knives; a painful progress with bleeding feet and toiling breath. Instead, he finds that it is a calm and peaceful way. Luther confessed to Staupitz that the word "repentance," which he formerly thought the most terrifying word in the Bible, was now the most gracious. And Bengel says, "Repentance is a joyful gift." (Cf. Acts 11: 18.) The waters of Marah have been sweetened by the tree of healing. (Read Ex. 15: 22-26.)

### Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

#### Introduction

Tell something about Jeremiah, the book which bears his name, and his ministry.

How does Jeremiah appear from the Christian's point of view?

Why, apparently, did he condemn his enemies so severely?

#### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What use did Peter make of them?

What was Isaiah's original purpose in speaking them?

What great contrast is brought to our attention in this context?

Why were the servants of God so successful in their contests with their enemies?

#### The Reaction to Jeremiah's Preaching

Why do so many professed children of God object to the preaching of his word?

What is always essential to a proper understanding of the gospel message?

In what way did Jeremiah demonstrate his courage and devotion to Jehovah?

Who in our day has a work similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament period?

Why can't there be a substitute for preaching the plain and simple word of God?

How did the people who heard Jeremiah react to his preaching?

What attitude in this respect has characterized the entire human race?

What did Jesus teach regarding this question?

What is the least that any one can do when he hears some one claim to preach the gospel?

Show how this situation was demonstrated during Paul's apostolic ministry.

How can people make certain that they are hearing the pure word of God?

Why do such a few people follow this course?

#### The Charge against, and the Defense of, Jeremiah

What part did the princes have in the trial of Jeremiah?

Who made the charges against the prophet?

How did Jeremiah react to those charges?

What was the usual course of the apostle Paul under similar circumstances?

How should any child of God feel about such matters?

What probable reason is there for suffering on the part of the righteous under such circumstances?

How will all of these things eventually be cleared up?

#### The Verdict Regarding Jeremiah and Some Supporting Evidence

What was the verdict regarding Jeremiah and why did the princes render it?

Why the difference in the fates of Uriah and Jeremiah?

What supporting evidence was offered in Jeremiah's behalf?

What did this show on the part of the elders of the land?

## Lesson IX—November 29, 1970

### JEREMIAH WARNS OF CAPTIVITY

#### Lesson Text

Jer. 8: 20-22; 9: 10-16

20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

21 For the hurt of the daughter of

my people am I hurt: I mourn; dismay hath taken hold on me.

22 Is there no balm in Gil'e-ad?

*is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passeth through; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the birds of the heavens and the beasts are fled, they are gone.

11 And I will make Je-ru'-sa-16m heaps, a dwelling-place of jackals; and I will make the cities of Ju'-dah a desolation, without inhabitant.

12 Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is* he to whom the mouth of Je-ho'-vah hath spoken, that he may declare it?

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29: 13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Jer. 9: 17-24.

### Daily Bible Readings

November 23.	M.....	Repentance too Late (2 Kings 23: 21-27)
November 24.	T.....	Final Rebellion (2 Chron. 36: 11-18)
November 25.	W.....	Judgment Comes (2 Chron. 36: 17-21)
November 26.	T.....	Grievous Sins of Kings (2 Kings 24: 1-9)
November 27.	F.....	Captives' Song of Grief (Psalm 137)
November 28.	S.....	Bitterness and Grief (Psalm 80: 1-7)
November 29.	S.....	Hope and Prayer (Psalm 22: 1-8)

TIME.—Probably about 608-606 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Jeremiah and the people of Judah.

### Introduction

J. Oswald Sanders calls Jeremiah the prophet of tears and trust; and the average person who speaks of that man of God, usually thinks of him as the weeping prophet. He did shed many tears for his people; but that side of Jeremiah was by no means his most distinguishing characteristic. Those who would make a fair appraisal of the life and character of Jeremiah, must take into account the circumstances of the age in which he lived, his person, and the character of his message. He was born and reared in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and he had therefore a very intimate understanding of the general attitude and practice of the people who made up the kingdom of Judah. Jehovah personally called him to be a prophet, and made it very clear to him that he would be dealing with a sinful and stubborn

*wherefore is the land perished and burned up like a wilderness, so that none passeth through?*

13 And Je-ho'-vah saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein,

14 But have walked after the stubbornness of their own heart, and after the Ba'-al-im, which their fathers taught them;

15 Therefore thus said Je-ho'-vah of hosts, the God of Is'-ra-el, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

16 I will scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them.

people. (See Jer. 1: 4ff.) His entire life was spent in preaching to a hard and obstinate nation, who were insensible alike to the pleadings of love, and the denunciations of wrath. Any thoughtful and devoted servant of God would feel for his brethren, as he saw them plunging headlong into eternal destruction; and that was certainly true of the tenderhearted Jeremiah.

The *New Bible Dictionary*, in speaking of Jeremiah, says, “Jeremiah’s personality is the most sharply etched of any of the Old Testament prophets. Indeed, it is not exaggeration to say that in order to understand what the Old Testament means by the term prophet it is necessary to study the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s call, his vocation as a bearer of the word of God, the authority which this

communicated to him, the manner in which the word was revealed to him, his clear-cut distinctions between the true prophet and the false, his message and the agonizing dilemmas in which his fidelity to it entangled him—all are delineated in Jeremiah's oracles with an authority that is irresistible. This is because of the correlation between the prophet's spiritual and emotional experience and his prophetic ministry.

"His emotions are vividly exhibited even in his discourses. From the content of his preaching it is plain that Jeremiah was a man of marked contrasts. He was at once gentle and tenacious, affectionate and inflexible. In him the frailties of the flesh contended with the energies of the spirit. The natural aspirations of youth were to the youthful prophet denied. He insisted on repentance from a people who were incapable of contrition. He unmasked the nation's sins and broadcast its judgment knowing that it would end in futility. Those whom he loved hated him. A loyal patriot, he was branded a traitor. This prophet of undying hope had to exhibit the fallacy of his people's hope. This priestly intercessor was commanded to intercede no more.

### The Golden Text

*"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* It was necessary for Jehovah to send his people into captivity; for in no other way could they be brought to realize their attitude and conduct toward their God, and be brought to the point of giving their lives to him. The words of the golden text are taken from a letter which Jeremiah sent to the captives in Babylon. He urged them to seek the peace of the city, and pray unto Jehovah for it; "for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." The prophet then went on to urge the people not to allow the false prophets among them to deceive them, but to put their trust in God; for he would, in due time, bring them back to their homeland. (Read Jer. 29: 1-14.)

If we look at the text now under consideration, in an effort to learn a lesson for our day, we may surely feel that every real affliction which

This lover of Judah was by Judah maligned."

With these facts before us, it is not difficult to understand why Jeremiah wept for his people. He was, to a large extent, characterized by the same spirit, which actuated Jesus in his attitude toward Jerusalem; or, to say the same thing in another way, Jeremiah had both the disposition and the capacity to weep for his people, who were in rebellion against God. As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (See Luke 19: 41-44.) There are few things which bring greater distress to the heart of a faithful teacher of God's word, than to see evil coming upon those whom he loves. (Cf. Acts 20: 31.)

comes upon the Lord's people, is in reality a kind of captivity. W. M. Taylor notes that to be in a condition which we would never voluntarily choose, or to be held back by the power of something which we cannot control, from that which we would like so much to have or to do, is the kind of experience which makes it into a trial. But we should always remember that every such captivity, in which the Christian is a victim, will have an end. The apostle Paul assures us that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10: 13; cf. James 1: 5-8.)

But regardless of the condition in which we may be involved in this life, we can always be certain of

finding God, if we search for him with all our hearts. The great apostle to the Gentiles said, "And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not

far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring."  
(Acts 17: 26-28.)

No one has ever failed to find the Lord, who sought for him with his whole heart. (Cf. Deut. 4: 29; Isa. 55: 6, 7; Luke 15: 17-24.)

## The Text Explained

### A Lament over a Wounded People

(Jer. 8: 20-22)

*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt: I mourn; dismay hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

The harvest time, as a rule, is a happy occasion. When the dangers which threatened the seed, since they were first into the ground and all stages of growth and maturity from that day and onward, have passed, and the time has arrived for the ingathering, those who were responsible for the cultivation of the crop, usually go about the harvest with a keen sense of satisfaction. But along with that joyous atmosphere there is always a somber note; for there is something about the fall of the year which tends to make us thoughtful. Autumn is the perfect parable of all that fades. Clarence Edward Macartney expresses the matter in these words: "Yesterday I saw the forests in all their splendor, and Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But tomorrow the rain will fall, the winds will blow, and the trees will be stripped and barren. Therefore every returning autumn brings home to me the sense of the preciousness of life's opportunities—their beauty, but also their brevity. It fills me with the desire to say not merely something about the way that leads to life eternal; but, with the help of God, something which shall move men to take the way of life *now*, Today."

The background against which the words of this section of the lesson text were spoken, may be seen by reading the verses which immedi-

ately precede it, namely, "Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow! my heart is faint within me. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people from a land that is very far off: Is not Jehovah in Zion? is not her King in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with foreign vanities?" (Jer. 8: 18, 19.) It was therefore amid the afflictions, which the rebellious people brought on themselves by their idolatrous practices, that the prophetic ear of Jeremiah heard their cry in Babylonian exile, "Is not Jehovah in Zion?" then why are we here? but the answer comes ringing back, It is because of your disobedience and idol worship. The rich man in Hades cried for God's help, but it was too late for him; and that will be the fate of uncounted millions who are for ever lost. They simply waited until the harvest was over; and so, in the words of John Greenleaf Whittier,

For of all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

Jeremiah, in asking about a remedy for the hurt of his people, touched on the heart of the matter. Their sin was both deep and fatal—a malignant malady, which went to the very roots of their being; and the prophet clearly saw that there was no physician who could deal with it, other than God Almighty himself. Gilead was a region east of the Jordan, where trees and shrubs grew from which balsams were obtained, that were used by physicians in the eastern world for medicinal purposes. These curative and preventive remedies must have been quite effective in that part of the world, so far as physical diseases were concerned; but they had no ef-

feet whatsoever on the moral and spiritual maladies which affected the godless people of Judah and Jerusalem. There is no physician, no teacher, and no remedy which can cure a heart which is sick with sin, except the Great Physician and the remedy which he has prescribed.

### A Lamentation for a Wasted Land

(Jer. 9: 10, 11)

*For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up, so that none passeth through; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle; both the birds of the heavens and the beasts are fled, they are gone. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, a dwelling-place of jackals; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.*

This brief lament, in which the barren condition of the cities and the countryside are portrayed, is very suggestive. It appears to be more than a vision of desolation of the material landscape: it bears witness to the depredations of the invaders. (Cf. Jer. 4: 23-26.) The terrible condition may be described as the "silence of emptiness," which had settled down over the land. The pastures are so barren that no one passes through; and no one could even see or hear the voice of cattle, beasts, or birds. Cowper gives some idea of the unbearable oppressiveness of silence and solitariness in these words:

Oh, solitude! where are the charms

That sages have seen in thy face?

Better dwell in the midst of alarms,

Than reign in this horrible place.

The circumstances which brought about the terrible conditions which are described in this section of the lesson text, are set forth by the prophet in these words:

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongue, as it were their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth:

for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith Jehovah. Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will go about with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity. Their habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith Jehovah.

"Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how else should I do, because of the daughter of my people? Their tongue is a deadly arrow, it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait for him. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith Jehovah; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. 9: 1-9.)

Jeremiah, in some respects, stands alone among the prophets. He did, to be sure, speak a positive message, as did Isaiah; but the prophet about whom we are now studying often manifested, apparently more than some of the others, human feeling for the moral and spiritual condition of his people, and for their future prospects of ruin and captivity, if they did not change their ways. Jeremiah fully realized what was going to happen to them, if they continued their sinful practices; and it is possible that he sometimes felt as Paul did toward his brethren, when he said, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit," that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9: 1-3.) We should not overlook the fact that it is always the righteous who are interested in, and who are willing to make great personal sacrifices for the thoughtless and unfaithful; in order to try to get them to return to and give themselves to the Lord. John voices the same sentiment, when he writes, "Hereby know we

love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3: 16.)

It is a terrible thing for one to watch his people go into political and physical captivity here upon the earth, even where there is hope for their deliverance at some future time. We have already seen in the discussion of the golden text, that that was the situation with the people of the Lord during the period we are now considering; but there was more involved than personal and political bondage. Those people were deeply involved in sin. Jeremiah, as has been pointed out again and again, was primarily concerned with the spiritual welfare of his people. They were hard-hearted and determined to have their own way; and were not interested in walking in the way of the Lord; and this means that they were headed for irretrievable destruction. (Cf. 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.) Lord Macaulay, the great English historian, reminds one of Jeremiah's situation, when he wrote the following words:

"It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man, condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during the alternating fits of stupefaction and raving which precede its dissolution, and to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness, and corruption."

#### A Threat of Ruin and Exile

(Jer. 9: 12-16)

*Who is the wise man, that may understand this? and who is he to whom the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken, that he may declare it? wherefore is the land perished and burned up like a wilderness, so that none passeth through? And Jehovah saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the stubbornness of their own heart, and after the Baalim, which their fathers taught them; therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them*

*water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them.*

There were many false prophets among the Lord's people, during Jeremiah's day; and it appears that the true prophet was here seeking to distinguish between the true and the false. The questions which Jeremiah raised were pertinent to the issue; or to state the same thing in another way, Jeremiah was challenging the popular viewpoint of their so-called wise men, that is, the ones referred to in Jer. 8: 8, 9, namely, "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of Jehovah is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely. The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of Jehovah; and what manner of wisdom is in them?" The idea here is similar to that expressed by Paul, when he wrote to professed Christians who questioned both his wisdom and his inspiration. "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord. But if any man is ignorant, let him be ignorant." (1 Cor. 14: 37, 38.)

Jeremiah had declared the situation as it was; or, he had given a reasonable and true explanation of the painful conditions, through which the people of Judah and Jerusalem were passing, and were still to pass; and now he tells them that if they can produce a really wise, or inspired, man, that is, one who understands that which the Lord was doing, then he will, like Jeremiah, explain what has happened to the people and to the land of Judah. (Cf. Hos. 14: 9.) It is quite possible that the people themselves were asking the questions about the state of affairs which they were experiencing; and, inasmuch as the false prophets, priests, and so-called wise men, had been giving them comforting answers, it was in order for Jeremiah to set the truth before them. Insufficient and false answers can suffice for a while; but the time will



eventually come, when more information will be demanded.

Jeremiah referred to the policy of the false prophets more than once, namely, "And they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer. 8: 11; 6: 14.) Those false teachers refused to consider the real seriousness of the people's wound—their illness which was unto death; but merely minimized their true condition. And so, instead of skilled and honest surgery, which was needed to cut away the malicious growth of infidelity and wickedness, the spurious prophets, like faithless physicians, treated the wound superficially, and soothed the patients with false assurances of essential well-being.

The inspired description of the false prophets is given in these words: "Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then Jehovah said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them: they prophesy unto you a lying vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their own heart. Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land: By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out of the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them—they, their wives, nor their

sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them." (Jer. 14: 13-16.)

It seems that people will never learn that it does not benefit any one, to listen to anything which is different from that which the Lord has spoken. There have always been false teachers—some because they are themselves deceived, while others are so by design; but regardless of the reason for erroneous teaching, such people can never please God, and any one who follows them will have to suffer the consequence of accepting and following false doctrine. The "precepts of men" always lead away from God; and Jesus says, "And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into the pit." (Read Matt. 15: 1-14.) In the language of the apostle Paul, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." (Gal. 1: 6-10.) The fate of the "false prophet," who is a symbol of all anti-Christian or false religions, is clearly set forth in the Book of Revelation. (See Rev. 20: 10.)

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Renate the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What kind of a man was Jeremiah and why is he so often referred to as the weeping prophet?

What is the best method to follow in studying his life and character?

Give a resume of his life and character.

In what respect was he like Jesus?

### The Golden Text

Why was it essential that Jehovah send his people into captivity?

Why do the Lord's people often have to

suffer trials and afflictions in this life?

What gracious promise has the Lord made to them?

How do we know that we can always find the Lord, if we seek for him wholeheartedly?

### A Lament over a Wounded People

What is usually true of the harvest time and why?

Why is there always a somber feeling at that season of the year?

What great lesson can we learn from the fall of the year and why?

Against what background did Jeremiah speak this section of the lesson text?

What question did the prophet suggest

and what was his reply to it?  
 What happens when people call too late for God to hear them?  
 Why was the sin of the people of Judah and Jerusalem so serious?  
 What was involved in the reference to the balm of Gilead and the physician?

#### A Lamentation for a Wasted Land

What is suggested by the reference to the barren condition of Judah and Jerusalem?  
 Discuss the effect of the silence of emptiness.  
 What did Jeremiah say regarding the coming condition of the land and its cities?  
 What indictment did the prophet make against his people?  
 Why were they so wicked?  
 What was the feeling of Jeremiah as he spoke against his people?  
 In what way does his attitude remind us of Paul?  
 Why is it so terrible for one to watch his people sink into sin and bondage?

What effect should this have on us in our day?

#### A Threat of Ruin and Exile

What do we know regarding false prophets in Jeremiah's day?  
 What did he apparently mean by his reference to a wise man?  
 Why was his question so important?  
 In what way did Paul deal with a similar incident in his day?  
 What had Jeremiah done regarding the condition of things in Judah and Jerusalem?  
 What did he expect any wise man, or any inspired man to do?  
 If the people were asking the questions, why would they do so?  
 What was the general policy of the false prophets of Jeremiah's day?  
 What is the inspired description of the false prophets of the time of this lesson?  
 What important lesson are people, generally speaking, so slow in learning?  
 Why is it fatal to follow the lead of false teachers?  
 What does the New Testament say regarding this matter?

## Lesson X—December 6, 1970

### BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

#### Lesson Text

Jer. 39: 1-10

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

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

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

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

5 But the army of the Chal-de'-ans pursued after them, and overtook Zed-e-ki'-ah in the plains of Jer'-icho: and when they had taken him,

they brought him up to Neb-u-chad-rez'-zar king of Bab'-y-lon to Rib'-lah in the land of Ha'-math; and he gave judgment upon him.

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And he carried away all Jerusalem, . . . none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land."* (2 Kings 24: 14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Kings 29: 1-20.

Daily Bible Readings

November	30. M.....	Encouragement of Ezekiel (Ezek. 34: 1-6)
December	1. T.....	Blessings Promised (Ezek. 36: 22-28)
December	2. W.....	Return Prophesied (Jer. 29: 10-14)
December	3. T.....	A Spiritual Restoration (Psalm 124)
December	4. F.....	Joyful Return (Psalm 126)
December	5. S.....	A Prayer for Salvation (Psalm 80: 1-7)
December	6. S.....	Temple to Be Rebuilt (Ezra 6: 1-12)

TIME.—587 B.C.

PLACES.—Judah, Jerusalem, and Babylon.

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

Introduction

In a previous lesson, something was said about the strength and ruthlessness of the Assyrian kings, and their empire; but when we reach the period we are now considering, that mighty empire had just about run its course. Paul said, many years later that God “made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons [that is, the period of their existence], and the bounds of their habitation [that is, the place on the earth where they would be located].” (Acts 17: 26.) The Scriptures plainly teach that Jehovah continues to rule in the kingdoms of men. (Cf. Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1-7.)

The allied forces of Media and Babylon overthrew the Assyrians, about the time that Josiah completed his great reforms; and it was when Pharaoh-necoh was hastening to the aid of the Assyrians at Carchemish, where he was decisively defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, that Josiah was fatally wounded by the Egyptians. That terrible blow ended, for all practical purposes, the reformation which Josiah had made possible; for the simple reason that the people of Judah were not interested in the reformation, and did not therefore respond to his righteous leadership. Josiah was able to hold things together during his lifetime; but when he was gone, the short-lived reformation soon fell apart.

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

him king in his father’s stead.” (2 Kings 23: 30.) This was the last time that the people of Judah had the opportunity of crowning their own king. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old, when he ascended the throne; but his reign lasted only three months. “And he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh-necoh put him in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh-necoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim: but he took Jehoahaz away; and he came to Egypt, and died there. And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-necoh.” (2 Kings 23: 32-35.)

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

did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood: and Jehovah would not pardon." (2 Kings 24: 3, 4.)

Following the death of Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, became king; but Nebuchadnezzar carried him to Babylon, after a short reign of three months. "And the king of Babylon

made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's father's brother, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah." (Read 2 Kings 24: 1-20.) Zedekiah was the last king of Judah; and his terrible end is recorded in 2 Kings 25. The last four kings of Judah, three sons and a grandson of Josiah, were uniformly wicked, in addition to being only vassals to the kings of Egypt and Babylon, respectively.

### The Golden Text

*"And he carried away all Jerusalem, . . . none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land."* It had been one hundred and thirty-four years since the people of the northern kingdom, the kingdom of Israel, had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians; and it appears that the removal of the people from their land was complete. But with that great example before them, the people of Judah, that is, the southern kingdom, did not learn that God must be obeyed; or destruction would eventually follow. The people of the southern realm continued their downward descent, with an occasional reversal of the downward trend, as in the cases of some of the better kings and their reforms; but the day of final reckoning came, a few years after the death of the last good king—Josiah; and the kingdom of Judah was no more. The inspired historian describes the last days in these words:

"Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of Jehovah, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house,

burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away captive. But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen." (2 Kings 25: 8-12.)

The territory of the southern kingdom was left desolate, until "the land had enjoyed its sabbaths: for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." (See 2 Chron. 36: 17-21.) The land of Judah was ready to be re-occupied by the people who had been taken from it, and their descendants, when the years which had been ordained by Jehovah had been completed. This gave hope to captives like Daniel, who continued to have faith to pray with their faces toward Jerusalem. The people of the northern kingdom never came back as a separate people; but they were permitted to return with the people of Judah, that is, those who wanted to could return. (Cf. Ezek. 37: 15-23.)

### The Text Explained

#### The Siege and Capture of Jerusalem

(Jer. 39: 1-3)

*And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the*

*city), that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, to wit, Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.*

The occasion for the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans, referred to in the section of the lesson text just quoted, was the rebellion of Zede-

kiah; and it appears that Nebuchadnezzar (note the different spelling in Jeremiah—Nebuchadrezzar) determined to put an end to Zedekiah's reign. The siege against Jerusalem continued for eighteen months, except for a brief interruption, during which time the Chaldeans left to engage the Egyptians, who were on their way to give aid to the beleaguered monarch of Judah. The Egyptians were defeated, and returned to their own land; but the Chaldeans returned to Jerusalem, and continued their siege. It was while the Chaldeans were away from the city, that Jeremiah warned the king not to be deceived into thinking that Jerusalem would not fall; and the prophet also urged the king to surrender peaceably unto the invaders, and go with them into captivity. (See Jer., chapters 34-37.)

Some of the principal men of Jerusalem "heard the words that Jeremiah spake unto all the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey, and he shall live. Thus saith Jehovah, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it. Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." (Jer. 38: 1-5.)

The princes then had Jeremiah put into a dungeon, where he sank into the mire; but he was rescued by one of the eunuchs, an Ethiopian. The King then sought an interview with the prophet, when the exhortation to go peaceably with the Chaldeans was repeated; but the weak king again declined to follow Jeremiah's advice. Something of the terrible condition within Jerusalem during the siege, may be learned from the twenty-fifth chapter of 2

Kings. (Cf. 2 Kings 6: 24-7: 20.) Thus, as a result of this protracted and effective (from the viewpoint of the Chaldeans) siege, the people of Jerusalem were reduced to dreadful extremities; and under the maddening influence of hunger, the most inhuman atrocities were committed. (Cf. Lam. 2: 20-22; 4: 9-18; Ezek. 5: 10.) All of this was in fulfillment of the prophetic denunciations which warned the people of their fate, if they should apostatize. (Cf. Lev. 26: 29; Deut. 28: 53-57; Jer. 15: 2; 27: 12, 13; Ezek. 4: 16.) But, terrible as those things were, they were but a faint foretaste of the awful fate of the ones who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. And there are people today, claiming to be members of the Lord's church, who do not hesitate to try to destroy the character and influence of those faithful gospel preachers and teachers, who speak the word of the Lord—the part which they do not like—unto the people.

Jehovah had promised that the sceptre would not depart from Judah until Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, should come (see Gen. 49: 10); and since the people of the southern kingdom had demonstrated that they were no longer capable of maintaining a nation which was loyal to Jehovah, the captivity had become a practical necessity in order to preserve the line of David from extinction, and the people of Judah from irredeemable apostasy. The people of Judah were therefore removed from their homeland into a foreign country; and although the action was drastic, the results were gratifying: for under the chastening rod of Babylon, they renounced their idolatry, reestablished their monotheistic faith, and were never again guilty of placing their trust in the gods of this world.

### The Attempt of Zedekiah and the Men of War to Escape

(Jer. 39: 4, 5)

*And it came to pass that, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them,*

*and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; and he gave judgment upon him.*

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

Matthew Henry, in commenting on Zedekiah's efforts to escape from the Chaldeans, makes this observation: "But those as much deceive themselves, who think to escape God's judgments, as those who think to brave them; the feet of him who flees from them will as surely fail as the hands of him that fights against them; when God judges, he will overcome." If Zedekiah had listened to Jeremiah, he would have had the help of Jehovah, even though he was in the hands of his enemies; but, as it was, he had neither the help of Jehovah, nor the sympathy of the king of Babylon. Furthermore, Zedekiah's refusal to heed the counsel of Jeremiah, not only brought affliction on himself, but destruction to the city of Jerusalem, which the king of Babylon had twice before spared. God's discipline for his people is not primarily for their destruction, but for their good, if they are willing to submit to it; but it will indeed re-

sult in their destruction, if they continue to rebel against it. (Cf. Heb. 12: 1-13; 1 Cor. 10: 13; Heb. 2: 14-16.)

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

### **The Punishment of the King and the Destruction of the City**

(Jer. 39: 6-10)

*Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. The Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, that had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.*

It should be kept in mind that the king of Babylon was responsible for Zedekiah's being king of Judah, and that the latter rebelled against Neb-

uchadnezzar. (See 2 Kings 24: 17, 20.) Josephus' account of Zedekiah's being taken to Riblah is as follows: "When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and a covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him. He also reproached him for his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and given it to him, he had made use of the power he gave him against him that gave it; 'but,' said he, 'God is great, who hated that conduct of thine, and hath brought thee under us.' " There is no question about the Lord's attitude toward deception and ingratitude. (Cf. Ezek. 21: 25; Luke 17: 17, 18.)

Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold the fate of Zedekiah, but some unfriendly critics of the Bible have endeavored to show that there is a discrepancy between the two prophets. For example, Jeremiah said, "And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall bring Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith Jehovah." (See Jer. 32: 4, 5; cf. 34: 4, 5.)

Ezekiel's words are: "And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes, My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." (Ezek. 12: 12, 13.) There is, of course, no real difficulty in understanding the two statements of the two prophets, when they are read in the light of the historical facts of our lesson text, that is, in the light of that which happened at Riblah. This demonstrates the importance of considering all the facts, before reaching a conclusion. Zedekiah's eyes were put out at Riblah, before he

was taken to Babylon; and it was for that reason that he did not see the land, notwithstanding the fact that he died there. Inspired prophecy is indeed a major factor in establishing the credibility of the Scriptures.

We learn from the parallel account in 2 Kings 25, that Nebuzardan executed the king of Babylon's orders to burn the city, including the house of Jehovah, and break down the walls. No motive is given for this destruction; but it may have been done as an act of revenge; since the walls had kept the Chaldeans out of the city, during the time of the siege. But whatever may have prompted the conquerors in their work of destruction, it was in keeping with that which the prophets said would happen; and it had a powerful and sobering effect on the captives, after they reached Babylon; for, as some one has said, "Blessings brighten as they take their flight."

It was for the reason just stated that the Jews as exiles, in a strange and alien land, could look back to Judah and Jerusalem with reverence for a law which they had recklessly and persistently violated; with ardent love for a city which lay in ruins; and with zealous longing and devotion for the temple which they had so often defiled, and whose divinely-appointed services they had so frequently and so shamefully perverted. And it is good to know that many of them learned their lesson, as their subsequent history shows; but can the same thing be said of those who are now manifesting substantially the same attitude of disregard for the word of God and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? (Cf. Heb. 10: 25-31.) The feeling of the devout Jews in Babylon is reflected in Psalm 137, which a pious psalmist penned for them:

By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down, yea, we wept,  
When we remembered Zion.  
Upon the willows in the midst  
thereof

We hanged up our harps.  
For there they that led us captive  
required of us songs,  
And they that wasted us required of  
us mirth, saying,  
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing Jehovah's song  
In a foreign land?  
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,  
Let my right hand forget her skill.  
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of  
my mouth,  
If I remember thee not;  
If I prefer not Jerusalem  
Above my chief joy.  
Remember, O Jehovah, against the  
children of Edom

The day of Jerusalem;  
Who said. Rase it, rase it,  
Even to the foundation thereof.  
O daughter of Babylon, that art to  
be destroyed,  
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth  
thee  
As thou hast served us.  
Happy shall he be, that taketh and  
dasheth thy little ones  
Against the rock.

### Questions for Discussion

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

#### Introduction

What change in world powers are we  
made aware of in this lesson?  
What do we learn about the government  
of Judah, following the death of Josiah?  
Who was king at the time of this lesson  
and how did he gain the throne?

#### The Golden Text

How long did the kingdom of Judah con-  
tinue after the northern kingdom went  
into captivity?  
Under what circumstances did the king-  
dom of Judah come to an end?  
What does the Bible teach regarding the  
return of the Israelites from captivity?

#### The Siege and Capture of Jerusalem

Why did the Chaldeans invade Judah at  
the time of this lesson?  
How long did the siege continue before  
the city of Jerusalem was taken?  
What did Jeremiah urge the king of  
Judah to do and why?  
In what way did the princes react to Jer-  
emiah's advice to Zedekiah?  
What conditions prevailed in Jerusalem  
during the siege? Why was this true?  
Why, apparently, was it essential that the  
people of Judah go into captivity?

#### The Attempt of Zedekiah and the Men of War to Escape

What, in effect, was Zedekiah saying,  
when he attempted to escape from the  
Chaldean army?  
Why do the Lord's people so often reject  
his exhortations for their own welfare?

Give some instances of the manner in  
which this works today.  
What always happens when people reject  
the Lord's way?  
What is God's purpose in discipling his  
people?  
What did the army of Judah apparently  
do when it appeared that Zedekiah  
would be captured?  
What happened to the king of Judah  
when he fell into the hands of the Chal-  
deans?

#### The Punishment of the King and the Destruction of the City

Why did Nebuchadnezzar deal with Zed-  
ekiah so harshly?  
How does the Lord feel about ingratitude  
on the part of his people?  
Why, in fact, is ingratitude such a des-  
picable attitude for one to manifest?  
What predictions did Jeremiah and Ezek-  
iel make regarding the fate of Zede-  
kiah?  
What have unfriendly Bible critics tried  
to make of this?  
What is the real truth regarding the two  
predictions?  
What important lesson should we learn  
from this?  
What bearing does inspired prophecy have  
in establishing the credibility of the  
Bible?  
Why is this true?  
Describe the final end of the original  
kingdom of Judah.  
What effect did the captivity of the people  
have on their future attitude toward the  
Lord?  
What application of this can be made for  
our day?

### Lesson XI—December 13, 1970

## THE PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS

### Lesson Text

#### Ezra 1: 1-11

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in lovingkindness."* (Mic. 7: 18.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Chron. 36: 17-23.

### Daily Bible Readings

December	7. M.....	God's Anger Ended (Mic. 7: 1-18)
December	8. T.....	The Proclamation of Cyrus (Ezra 1: 1-4)
December	9. W.....	Rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 1: 5-11)
December	10. T.....	The Return (Ezra 3: 8-13)
December	11. F.....	Haggai Encourages the People (Hag. 1: 2-8)
December	12. S.....	Jeremiah Encourages the People (Jer. 29: 10-14)
December	13. S.....	A Psalm of Thanksgiving (Psalm 100)

TIME.—536 B.C.

PLACES.—Babylon and Jerusalem.

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

### Introduction

It was suggested in last week's lesson that the captivity of Judah apparently was necessary, in order to the fulfillment of God's promise regarding the final phase of the kingdom of Judah (cf. Luke 1: 32, 33); and the captivity, like the law, was added because of transgressions (Gal. 3: 19). But when the captivity of Judah did become essential to the plan and purposes of God, it was carried out under very definite principles. Although the captivity itself was relatively short in duration, the people themselves were kept in political subjugation for the remainder of the time (nearly six hundred years) before the coming of Christ, except for the period of the Macca-

bees, when they enjoyed a kind of military independence. The last king in the line of David, that is, the one furthest away from him in the order of descent, was Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah. (Jer. 22: 24-30.) Zedekiah was a descendant of David, but not a descendant of Jehoiachin. (2 Kings 24: 17.) The next person, in direct line of David, to occupy the throne of David, was the Christ. (Luke 1: 32, 33; Acts 2: 29-32.)

Ezekiel, who was taken captive to Babylon, along with Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24: 10-16; Ezek. 1: 1-3), said of Zedekiah: "And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the

time of the iniquity of the end, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21: 25-27.) Jehoiachin, the immediate predecessor of Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, was already in Babylon; and this means that the wicked prince of Judah was Zedekiah. If Ezekiel's statement, just quoted, is read in the light of Dan. 2, it will be seen that the probable meaning of the threefold "overturn," was with reference to the *overturning* of one world empire after another; until the time arrived for the establishment of the kingdom, which will never be destroyed (Dan. 2: 44); for it was then that he came whose right the crown was; and it was then that Jehovah gave it to him (Acts 2: 36).

When the captivity became a reality, the following letter was written unto the people: "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon: Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear

sons and daughters: and multiply ye there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you; neither hearken ye to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith Jehovah. For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith Jehovah, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you hope in your latter end. And ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith Jehovah, and I will turn again your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Jehovah; and I will bring you again unto the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." (See Jer. 29: 1-14; cf. 2 Chron. 36: 17-21.) It is against this kind of a background that the decree of Cyrus must be considered.

### The Golden Text

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

thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." (Mic. 7: 18-20.)

Micah lived about a hundred years before the time of this lesson, and in the midst of great corruption; but he was permitted to see the time when the love of God, will gain the ultimate victory, as the words just quoted so clearly show. Unequal contests could be seen all around Micah, with evil apparently in the ascendancy; but with his own heart set upon righteousness, he was able to keep before him the unchangeable God. And although sin had to be punished, that fact could never overshadow, nor make of non-effect, the willingness of Jehovah to forgive all who will turn unto him. This was true of the peo-

pie in Micah's day; it was true of those who were in Babylonian captivity; and it is still true of those who are living today. The grace of forgiveness does not depend upon those who do wrong, or upon any other human being; it is an attribute of God himself, as is so clearly stated by Isaiah, who was contemporary with Micah: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins." (Isa. 43: 25.) Forgiveness of sins therefore is never due to any merit on man's part, but rather for God's glory and the honor of his name.

The fact that God does not retain his anger for ever, shows his absolute uniqueness; and it was for that reason that Micah asked, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" Only Jehovah can deal so kindly, and so effectively, with the problem of sin; and he is therefore

incomparable. God's ability to forgive sins, and to remember them no more, removes him far beyond the realm of compassion. This will be readily seen, when we remember that forgiveness is contrary to the essential character of everything else about which we are acquainted. Nature, for example, never forgives a breach of her own laws; and the same thing is true of society, and the world in general. Even though a man may atone for his transgressions; he will have to bear the stigma of them to the end of his days; for there are some people, even professing Christians, who will never forgive him. The bird with a broken pinion, never soars so high again. It is only by the grace of God that the individual, can bring *himself* to forgive himself. The lesson before us today, will be of practical benefit to us, only if we are able to see something of the meaning of God's forgiveness of sins; or, something of his forgiving love.

## The Text Explained

### The Proclamation of Cyrus Concerning the Temple

(Ezra 1: 1-4)

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.*

Cyrus had been king some twenty years before the time of this lesson, which means that the first year mentioned here, was not the first

year of his reign; but rather the first year of his reign over Babylon. The People's Bible Encyclopedia says that "Cyrus was one of the greatest men of any age. His genius for pacification and government was much more remarkable than his rare military talent. With an Asiatic career rivaling that of Alexander of Macedon, he was morally far greater than his imitator, though without any of the early advantages of the son of Philip and the pupil of Aristotle. His personal qualities are illustrated by his having won the hearts of many peoples speaking many strange tongues and professing many diverse religions. His administrative measures attest his statesmanship no less than his goodness. His liberation of the Hebrew exiles was the most far-reaching beneficent measure ever devised by a heathen monarch, and, along with the main tenor and purpose of his life, vindicates his prophetic title, 'The anointed of Jehovah.'"

One of the reasons why Saul of Tarsus was so easily changed from a persecuting zealot, to a humble servant of Christ, when he saw the light, was the fact that he was honest at heart, and always maintained

a clear conscience, that is, he always did that which he believed to be right. A man can always be influenced for good, when he possesses the qualities of manhood, which Saul possessed. This, apparently, was true of Cyrus, as is implied in the words concerning the stirring up of his spirit by Jehovah. Cyrus was the king of person who would respond to Jehovah's will regarding him, when once he knew what that will was. There is no evidence whatsoever, to the effect that Jehovah wrought a miracle, in causing Cyrus to do his bidding. On the contrary, Cyrus wanted to do the right thing to begin with; and when he learned God's will regarding him, however that was brought about, he immediately set about to do it.

Jehovah, more than a hundred years before the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, said of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." (Isa. 44: 28.) The prophecy concerning Cyrus continues: "Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the lions of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things. ... I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles

go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Isa. 45: 1-7, 13.)

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

If Cyrus did learn of Jehovah's prediction through Isaiah, by reading the record of his prophecy, is it any wonder that the Persian king gave God the credit for all his empire, and made the resolution to carry out God's will? It is true that the names of people who are living today, are not mentioned in the Scriptures, as was done in the case of Cyrus; but it is a pity that our hearts are not stirred to greater actions, when we read that which God has said of us and to us, just as certainly as he spoke concerning Cyrus. (Cf. Heb. 11: 39, 40; Acts 16: 14.)

It had been the policy of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans to uproot captive people, and transplant them in foreign lands; but it appears that Cyrus reversed that practice. The Assyrians were the most ruthless of all, and did not hesitate to crush out, not only all patriotism, but also all the manhood, of their captives. The Babylonians, on the other hand, endeavored to utilize the talents and skills of those whom they had conquered, as may be seen in the cases of Daniel and the three Hebrew children. But when Cyrus

came to the throne, he manifested a completely different conception of government. J. F. McCurdy notes that "he knew that the contentment of the subject was the essential condition of national prosperity, and that to secure such contentment a large measure of local freedom was necessary. Hence he encouraged the national aspirations of the peoples whom he found enthralled under the yoke of Babylon. How this love of freedom and righteousness was providentially used for the emancipation of the Hebrews we have seen declared in the prophecies that have been just cited." (*The People's Bible Encyclopedia*.)

There is no indication that Cyrus committed his own ways to Jehovah; but it is easy to see how God could use such a man, in carrying out the decrees of his own will—a man who was known for his clemency to all subdued people.

The purpose of Cyrus' proclamation, now under consideration, was to grant permission to all the Jews in his kingdom, who wanted to do so, to return to their homeland; and to encourage all who remained behind, to assist their brethren who did go, in rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple. The matter of going, or not going, was voluntary; but the very fact that all the Jews had the permission of the king to go, had the effect of restoring human dignity. Not every one, even today, can actually engage in the work which God has given the church to do; but every one can have a part in encouraging and supporting those who are active in the service. "But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal. 6: 6; cf. 1 Cor. 9: 11, 14; Acts 4: 32, 33.)

### God's People in Concerted Action

(Ezra 1: 5, 6)

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

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

There were many among the captives who were born in Babylon, and others who had established themselves there in business, who, because of family and commercial ties, decided to remain where they were; but many of them, apparently, contributed generously to the enterprise, which was to be undertaken in Jerusalem. "All they that were round about them" were evidently friends and neighbors of other races, but who, because of their favorable disposition toward the Jewish faith, or, in keeping with the policy of the government, "displayed hearty good-will and great liberality in aiding and promoting the views of the emigrants." Such a disposition is often seen today, especially where disaster has occurred, or where a great need exists; and while Christ has nowhere authorized his followers to solicit aid from others, there is no reason for rejecting such, if it is voluntarily offered. In fact, there is never a Lord's day, but that some one in the assembly of the saints somewhere, makes an offering, along with the Lord's people; and whoever heard of the elders seeing to it that the money which was given by a non-member, was taken out of the collection, and returned to him?

### The Temple Treasures Restored

(Ezra 1: 7-11)

*Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth*

*by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, nine and twenty knives, thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.*

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

Dr. William Smith notes that the Israelites left their Babylonian captivity, enriched with free-will offerings of that country, just as their fathers had left the Egyptian bondage, with the riches of the land of the Nile, both of which were to be consecrated to the service of Jehovah. (Cf. Ex. 25: Iff.) Dr. Smith continues: "But they carried back greater riches than all the treasures of Persia, in the moral gains of their captivity—their freedom from the blight of their idolatry. That sinful practice was never heard of after

the Babylonian exile, that is, so far as the Jews were concerned. (Cf. Heb. 12: 5-13.)

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

When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,  
We were like unto them that dream.  
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
And our tongue with singing:  
Then said they among the nations,  
Jehovah hath done great things for them.

Jehovah hath done great things for us,  
Whereof we are glad.  
Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah,

As the streams in the South.  
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth,  
bearing seed for sowing,  
Shall doubtless come again with joy,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

The psalmist encourages the Lord's people to look forward to a happy ending. (Cf. Eccl. 7: 8.) One of the later prophets of the Old Testament put the matter this way: "But it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light." (Zech. 14: 7.) God's people are not destined for a tragic end, but for ultimate good. L. P. Jacks has pointed out that the central theme of the New Testament, is immortality—not the immortality of anybody and everybody; but of the believer in Christ, whom God raised from the dead.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

### Introduction

Why, apparently, was the captivity essential to Jehovah's plan and purpose for his people?

What was the condition of the people of Judah during the next several hundred years?

Who was the last in the line of David's descendants to sit upon the literal throne?

What prediction was made regarding the future of the kingdom?

What advice did Jeremiah send to the captives in Babylon?

### The Golden Text

In what context are the words of the golden text found?

What great truth was Micah enabled to see?

What is the practical lesson which we should learn from the words of the golden text?

### The Proclamation of Cyrus Concerning the Temple

At what time in the reign of Cyrus was this proclamation issued?

Give some of the vital facts regarding the character of Cyrus.

Why was he called the anointed of Jehovah?

Why was Cyrus so ready to do that which the Lord ordained?

What principle was involved in this and in what way is it applicable to our day?  
How did Cyrus probably learn of God's will for him?

What lesson should we learn from this regarding the manner in which God opens the hearts of people today?

How did the policies of Cyrus differ from those of the Assyrians and the Babylonians?

What motive apparently actuated Cyrus in dealing with the people as he did?

What was the purpose of Cyrus' proclamation and how did it affect the people of his kingdom?

What lesson is there in this for us?

#### God's People in Concerted Action

Who were all the people who were involved in the movements mentioned in this section of the lesson text?

Who were those who were round about the Lord's people?

Is it right for the Lord's people to accept contributions from those who are not members of the church? Give reasons for your answer.

#### The Temple Treasures Restored

Who, apparently, was Sheshbazzar, and what was his place in the transactions mentioned here?

How did the treasures of the temple come to be in Babylon?

Discuss the difference in the attitudes of Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar with reference to the temple treasures.

What other encouragement did Cyrus give the returning exiles in their work for the Lord?

What was the greatest blessing which the Israelites took back with them to their homeland?

How did the liberated people celebrate their newly-bestowed freedom?

## Lesson XII—December 20, 1970

### A SONG OF DELIVERANCE

#### Lesson Text

#### Psalm 85: 1-13

1 Je-ho'-vah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land;  
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;  
Thou hast covered all their sin. [Se'-lah]

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath;  
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?  
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6 Wilt thou not quicken us again,  
That thy people may rejoice in thee?

7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Je-ho'-vah,

And grant us thy salvation.  
8 I will hear what God Je-ho'-vah will speak;  
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:  
But let them not turn again to folly.  
9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him,  
That glory may dwell in our land.  
10 Mercy and truth are met together;  
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.  
11 Truth springeth out of the earth;  
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.  
12 Yea, Je-ho'-vah will give that which is good;  
And our land shall yield its increase.  
13 Righteousness shall go before him,  
And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (Psalm 126: 3.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 121.

#### Daily Bible Readings

December 14. M.....The Day of Jehovah (Amos 5: 18-24)  
December 15. T.....Glory of the Lord's House (Psalm 122: 1-9)  
December 16. W.....The Glorious Word (Jer. 31: 27-34)  
December 17. T.....The Triumph of Righteousness (Isa. 9: 1-6)  
December 18. F.....The Promise of Peace (Mal. 4: 1-5)

December 19. S..... Judgment on the Nations (Joel 3: 9-16)

December 20. S..... Keeping God's Law (Neh. 8: 13-18)

TIME.—Neither the occasion for, nor the time of, composition is definitely known.

PLACE.—Unknown, but possibly Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—The psalmist (unknown) and the people of Israel.

## Introduction

The Book of Psalms, the portion of the Old Testament Scriptures from which the lesson text for today's study is taken, is comparable to our song books, or to a modern prayer and hymn book. All such compositions, whether those of the Old Testament period or those of our day, were, and are, written in poetic language; and are designed to express the feelings of those who use them in their religious worship. Practically all writers of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs were moved to do so by some truth, incident, or experience in their lives; and the authors of such compositions, if they expect others to use them in sacred worship, try to arrange them so that they will also express the thoughts and feelings of others. For example, the well-known and widely-used song, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, grew out of the experience and feelings of the author; but he composed the stanzas which make up the hymn in such a manner, as to enable others to use them to express their own feelings and aspirations.

The psalm which serves as the text for today's lesson was written by some person, or persons, as an expression of his, or their, feelings; and it was evidently intended to be used as a means of voicing, in poetic language, a prayer to Jehovah for his mercy upon the people as a whole, that is, upon the entire nation. The author, or authors, of the psalm are not known to us. An editorial note, following the suggested subject of the psalm, says, "For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah." Other psalms prefix this title, but none of them identifies the writer or writers. It appears that the sons of Korah were a family of Levitical singers, and it is, of course, possible that one or more of them may have composed the psalms which bear this title. Albert

Barnes notes that "so far as the *title* is concerned, it may mean either that the psalms were dedicated to them, or that they were submitted to them for arranging the music; or that they were designed to be employed by them as leaders of the music; or that they were the authors of these psalms, that is, that the psalms thus indicated emanated from their body, or were composed by one of their number. *Which* of these is the true idea must be determined, if determined at all, from some other source than the mere title." Many Bible students, including Spurgeon, think that David wrote the psalm now before us (cf. 2 Chron. 29: 29, 30); but, let it be said again, no one knows for certain. (Cf. Neh.12: 46.)

The important thing for us to consider in our study today is not who wrote the psalm, or when; but the truth which it contains. There is not a psalm in the entire Old Testament collection, nor an acceptable hymn or spiritual song which is used today, but what proclaims some great truth, or is based on some feeling or experience, which can be used in worshipping God Almighty. And with these things in mind, we are better able to appreciate the fact that one of the great blessings which the Old Testament brings to us, is the rich storehouse of spiritual songs, which supply us with the most appropriate language in which to address the Most High. The editor of *The Speaker's Bible* notes that "man, if he is to know the awed and reverent hour of worship, must have nobler words than his poor thought can make, expressions of higher emotions than his tame spirit can feel. There is wondrous power in song to consecrate and ennoble." This we shall see demonstrated in the psalm which we are to study today.



## The Golden Text

*"Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."* The words just quoted are taken from a psalm which belonged to a group, known as "Songs of Assents." (See Psalms 120-134.) It is thought that these psalms were chanted by the pilgrims, as they "went up" to Jerusalem for the annual feasts of the Jews, as authorized by Moses; or possibly, in addition to that, sung by them on one of the stairways, in or near the temple. The theme of the psalm from which the words of the golden text for today's lesson are taken, is, in the view of some Bible students, thanksgiving for the return from Babylonian captivity; although this is by no means the unanimous view of such students.

But whatever may have been the occasion for the writing of the psalm now before us, it remains a fact that the people of the Lord had been delivered from some great calamity, and Jehovah had restored their fortunes. "When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the nations, Jehovah hath done great things for them. Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are

glad." (Psalm 126: 1-3.) First, it was they among the nations who said, "Jehovah hath done great things for them"; and then the Lord's people themselves, as if in response to the words of the nations, repeated, "Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad"; thus making the matter personal, and expressing their gratitude.

This was also the sentiment of the people who lived during the time Jesus was engaged in his personal ministry; and it should be the sentiment of every person in the world today, and especially the Lord's own people. The inspired penman tells us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1: 17.) There is no way to measure the greatness of the joy and thanksgiving, which were felt and expressed by the people, who saw and were benefited by the Lord's miracles of mercy. Those blessings, however, were only for this life; what then should be our attitude toward the Lord, for his wonderful mercy on our behalf, as it respects our salvation here, and the promise of an eternal home with him in the world which is to come?

## The Text Explained

### Jehovah's Past Mercies and Benefits

(Psalm 85: 1-3)

*Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land;*

*Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*

*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;*

*Thou hast covered all their sin.*

*Selah*

*Thou hast taken away all thy wrath;*

*Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*

Inasmuch as we do not know for certain who composed this psalm, the occasion for it, nor the time of writing, we cannot therefore speak dogmatically regarding it. It is true that it speaks of the bringing back of "the captivity of Jacob"; but what was that captivity, and when did it take place? There are several different Hebrew words for "captiv-

ity." The usual terms for "removal" or "exile" and *golah*, *galah*, and *galuth*, while the term used in the text now before us, is *shebith*, the same word which is found in Job 42: 10. There is no indication that Job was exiled to another land or country. Spurgeon, in speaking of the subject and occasion of Psalm 85, says:

"The present Psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the temptation to do that, though, for our part we see no need to do so; it is true that a captivity is mentioned in the first verse, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of Jacob as brought back, but had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it

would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or Israel, as such, did not return." Albert Barnes notes that "it is not necessary to suppose that the allusion is to the period immediately preceding the time when the psalm was composed, but it may have been any period in their history. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the people had been removed from their land at the time; for all that would be necessary to suppose in interpreting the language would be that the land had been invaded even though the inhabitants still remained in it."

The exact point with which we should be concerned, is that some great calamity had befallen the Lord's people, and that he had overruled it to their favor; or, to say the same thing in another way; whatever the calamity may have been, Jehovah had restored the people from its adverse effects. Moffatt renders verse 1 in these words: "Once thou didst favour thy land, O Eternal, restoring the fortunes of Jacob." We have no way of knowing how far removed, so far as time is concerned, the period was when the psalm was written; but the people along with the psalmist, could praise the Lord for that which he had previously done for the land and its inhabitants. L. O. Sander-son, a few years ago, wrote a song, *The Lord Has Been Mindful of Me*, which the Lord's people in any age, following its composition, can use in extolling the goodness of God to his children; and this without reference to the time, or under what circumstance, the goodness was manifested. (See *Christian Hymns III*, No. 228.)

Whatever may have been the occasion to which the psalmist referred, the sins of the Lord's people which were responsible for the calamity, had been forgiven, or, as the alternate expression has it, "Thou hast covered all their sins." The original word for "cover" means to hide, conceal, or make impossible to see. The term for "cover" in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, is *kaluptō*, the same word which is used by James (5: 19-20), when he says, "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul

from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

One of the greatest blessings that any one can receive, is the forgiveness of his sins, by the only one who can really forgive, namely, God. He never becomes angry with his people, unless they sin; and he is always willing to put away his anger, when his children make it possible for him to forgive their wrongdoing. Peter says, "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil." (1 Pet. 3: 12.) And Paul, quoting the words of David, following his forgiveness of his sin in connection with Bath-sheba (Psalm 32: 1, 2), says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin." (Rom. 4: 7, 8.)

W. M. Grant points out that "the backward look to happier times is one of the most profitable and illuminating uses of history. Though we are reminded by the poet that 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,' this is only partly true, and is not true at all, if we use large maps of human life and destiny. For history, personal or national, may be one of the finest of inspirations, and a moral tonic; behold what God hath wrought! The Bible continually recalls men to past mercies: 'We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us what things thou didst in their day;' Lord, *once* thou didst favour thy land. And, as a rallying cry to worthiness, Jeremiah the prophet, speaking for God, challenged Israel with the memory of her better days." The prophet's words are: "Thus saith Jehovah, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel *was* holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, saith Jehovah." (Jer. 2: 2, 3.)

**A Prayer for the Present and the Future**  
(Psalm 85: 4-7)

*Turn us, O God of our salvation,*

*And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.*

*Wilt thou be angry with us forever?*

*Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*

*Wilt thou not quicken us again,*

*That thy people may rejoice in thee?*

*Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah,*

*And grant us thy salvation.*

It is a good thing for the Lord's people to consider frequently, and even dwell on, the past blessings of Jehovah; but that alone will not suffice. The human race, even the best of men, is prone to sin, or, which is the same thing, exposed to, or in danger of committing, sin; and that means that the Lord's people will have to continue on their guard against the evil one; for the closer one lives to the Lord, the greater will be Satan's attack on him.

One can easily see from the first section of the lesson text that the sins of the people who were brought back from the captivity, referred to in verse 1, had been forgiven; but the section of the text, now under consideration, makes it clear that the Lord's people were again in need of Jehovah's forgiveness. That condition, of course, will continue as long as men live in a sinful world. John makes it clear in the first epistle that bears his name, that no faithful child of God will continue to live a life of sin (1 John 3: 9); but he does plainly state that any Christian will be guilty of isolated acts of sin, as may be seen by reading 1 John 1: 8-10. The ebb and flow of Christian experience is the common lot of all of the Lord's people in this age of the world.

The truth is, if one will read the sacred record of God's dealing with his people, throughout the period of Biblical history, it will not be difficult for him to see that the need for revival, on the part of good people, has characterized God's children in every age of human experience. The term "revival," as used here, means to reanimate, restore from a state of languor, or renew zeal and activity in the service of the Lord. It is often easier for one to lapse into a state of indifference, and even wrongdoing, than it is for him to push forward in zealous and consecrated obedience, as the Lord ex-

pects him to do. It was this kind of a situation that the writer of Hebrews had in mind, when he said, "For when by reason of time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." (Heb. 5: 12.)

The word "revive," or its equivalent, is frequently found in both the Old and the New Testaments. (See, for example, in addition to the text we are now considering, Psalm 138: 7; Hos. 6: 1, 2; 14: 7; Hab. 3: 2; Isa. 57: 15; Ezra 9: 8, 9; Phil. 4: 10.)

The idea in all the passages just cited, is to restore one to the state or condition from which he descended. And so, regardless of the state or condition mentioned, or implied, in the passages just cited, they all illustrate what it means to be restored from a state of lethargy, indifference, or even sinful practices, to the full vigor of consecrated service in the cause of the Lord.

A "real revival" is the kind which results, when the Lord is allowed to have his way in the lives of his people. The psalmist called upon Jehovah to "turn us, . . . and cause thine indignation toward us to cease." Paul told the Roman brethren that the goodness of God leads men to repentance; and when those who are not pleasing him will respond favorably to his motivation, they will be turned to the Lord and his indignation toward them will cease. (Read Rom. 2: 4; cf. 2 Pet. 3: 9.) The idea which is being emphasized here, is essentially the one which is contained in the Lord's messages to the churches in Ephesus and Laodicea. (See Rev. 2: 1-7; 3: 14-22.) This is a lesson which most of us need to have impressed upon our minds; and when we demonstrate the disposition which a genuine revival implies, we may be sure that the Lord will show us his lovingkindness, and grant us his salvation.

#### **The Fulfillment of Hope or the Nearness of God (Psalm 85: 8-13)**

*I will hear what God Jehovah will speak;*

*For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:*

*But let them not turn again to folly.  
Surely his salvation is nigh them  
that fear him,  
That glory may dwell in our land.  
Mercy and truth are met together;  
Righteousness and peace have kissed  
each other.*

*Truth springeth out of the earth;  
And righteousness hath looked  
down from heaven.*

*Yea, Jehovah will give that which is  
good;*

*And our land shall yield its in-  
crease.*

*Righteousness shall go before him,  
And shall make his footsteps a way  
to walk in.*

The psalm which we are studying today was sung by the people back under the law of Moses; and if we can imagine the Levitical singers as they extolled the goodness and the righteousness of God, it probably went something like this: The first section of the lesson text was probably sung as a solo, to emphasize the mercies and benefits of Jehovah in times past; and then, in response, the full chorus utters a prayer to the effect that those same mercies and benefits be granted to the Lord's people, both for the present and for their future welfare. Following that, the soloist voices a willingness to hear Jehovah's word, and he speaks peace unto his people, who are here called his saints; but he immediately warns against returning to folly, or, that which is not pleasing to the Lord.

God's people today have few greater heritages than the privilege of singing praises unto him; and of "teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Even in the early church, maybe before songs were available for popular use in the congregation, during the time when inspiration was essential to the well-being of the Lord's people, Paul wrote, "What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation." (1 Cor. 14: 26.) Each one was expected to do his part, the singers, as well as all the others. No one can measure the influence which well-directed singing has on the worshippers as a whole, to say nothing of the singers them-

selves; and we may be certain that it will be pleasing to God, if we sing with the spirit, and with the understanding. (See 1 Cor. 14: 15; cf. John 4: 24.) In the words of Longfellow:

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

—The Singers.

When people are willing to listen to the Lord, they will always be directed in the proper course. God wants his people to be in harmony with him; and he alone is able to give the information which they need for correct living. That message, so far as we are concerned, is contained in his revelation to us. The Lord and his mercy are never far away (cf. Acts 17: 26-28); and he is able to make even this world a better place in which to live.

Verse 10, of the psalm we are now considering, is a remarkable passage, to say the least of it. The passage reads as follows:

"Mercy and truth are met together;  
Righteousness and peace have kissed  
each other."

Adam Clarke notes that mercy and peace are on one side; while truth and righteousness are on the other. Truth requires righteousness; mercy calls for peace. Clarke goes on to say, "Mercy and truth meet on the way; the one to condemn sin, the other to plead for reconciliation: and if one is willing to accept the testimony of the Scriptures, he can easily see that they are able to 'resolve' their differences, with the result that their respective claims are blended together in a common interest." It is on this basis that righteousness and peace kiss or embrace each other. If truth alone should have its way, then nothing short of complete righteousness would satisfy the Lord; but when mercy enters the picture, peace is seen upon the horizon, and is soon the possession of all who yield themselves to God. Or, to say the same thing in another way, mercy and truth meet in Christ Jesus; and righteousness and peace are the common lot of those who have found refuge in him. (Read 2 Cor. 5: 18-21.) The result

of this remarkable union is, that truth shall prevail among men, and

God will be pleased with the reformation of his people.

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

What is the nature and what was the purpose of the Book of Psalms of the Old Testament?

Under what circumstances do psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs usually come to be written?

What is definitely known about the psalm which we are to study today?

What is the principal thing about it in which we should be interested?

### The Golden Text

From what context are the words of the golden text taken?

What may have been the occasion for writing this psalm?

What place should the spirit of gratitude occupy in the lives of God's people and why?

What is usually the attitude and practice of people who are really grateful?

### Jehovah's Past Mercies and Benefits

What purpose did the psalmist have in mind in the first section of the lesson text?

What is definitely known regarding the "captivity of Jacob"?

What is the practical use which we should make of this part of the lesson?

What place does the "time element" usually have in the songs and hymns which we sing?

What is always responsible for great calamities which come upon the people of the earth?

What does it mean for one's sins to be covered?

When, and only when, is the wrath of God removed from his people?

What are some of the great blessings we

get from the backward look to better times?

What use did, and does, Jehovah make of such a practice?

### A Prayer for the Present and the Future

Notwithstanding the good which comes from the backward look, why doesn't that suffice?

What is the common relationship of the human race to sin?

What difference is noted between forgiveness of sin in the first two sections of the text?

What hope does the past give us in this respect?

Why is a "revival" so often needed by the Lord's people?

What is the meaning and the purpose of a genuine revival?

How does the Lord "turn" people from sin and toward himself?

What practical use of the principle involved in this did the Lord himself make?

### The Fulfillment of Hope or the Nearness of God

How, apparently, was the psalm we are now studying put into practice by the people of that day?

Why is the privilege of singing praises to God such a great blessing to his people?

What further use are we to make of this great privilege?

What is always essential before people can be guided into and in the right way?

Why is verse 10 such a remarkable statement?

In what way do mercy and truth meet together?

Under what circumstances do righteousness and peace kiss each other?

How are the principles involved in these things applied to us?

What result always follows these unions?

## Lesson XIII—December 27, 1970

### TEMPLE REBUILT

#### Lesson Text

Ezra 4: 1-6; 6: 15-18

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

2 Then they drew near to Ze-rub'-ba-bel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of E'-sar-had'-don king of As-syr'-i-a, who brought us up hither.

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

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Ju'-dah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cy'-rus king of Per'-si-a, even until the reign of Da-ri'-us king of Per'-si-a.

6 And in the reign of A-has-u-e'-rus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Ju'-dah and Je-ru'-sa-lem.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month A'-dar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Da-ri'-us the king.

16 And the children of Is'-ra-el,

the priests and the Le'-vites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

17 And they offered at the dedica-tion of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hun-dred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offer-ing for all Is'-ra-el, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Is'-ra-el.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Le'-vites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Je-ru'-sa-lem; as it is written in the book of Mo'-ses.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ezra 8: 21-32.

Daily Bible Readings

December 21. M.....	Wall of Jerusalem Rebuilt (Neh. 4: 6-23)
December 22. T.....	Temple Work Begins (Ezra 3: 8-13)
December 23. W.....	The Work Hindered (Ezra 4: 1-6)
December 24. T.....	The Work Stopped (Ezra 4: 17-24)
December 25. F.....	The Work Resumed (Ezra 6: 1-12)
December 26. S.....	The Temple Dedicated (Ezra 6: 13-18)
December 27. S.....	Praise to Jehovah (Psalm 95: 1-11)

TIME.—535 B.C.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

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

Introduction

The total number of captives who returned to Jerusalem and Judaea from Babylon, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, numbered about fifty thousand. (Ezra 2: 64-67; Neh. 7: 66-69.) The majority of them were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but the total number probably included some from the other tribes; for Cyrus addressed his proclamation to the Lord's people "throughout all his kingdom" (Ezra 1: 1; cf. Ezek. 37: 15-23), which in addition to those in Babylon, also included those who were carried away by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17: 6). Those who returned to the homeland are usually referred to as *Jews*, with no reference to tribal distinctions, except for the purpose of establishing pedigrees. We do not have any way of knowing just how many Jews were in Babylon, and elsewhere in the vast kingdom of Cyrus, at the time permission was granted to them to return home; but it is fair to assume that the number was far greater than the

total number of those who took advantage of the opportunity.

When the Jews reached the land of Judaea, there were many things to discourage them, as we look at the situation from the human point of view. People were living in parts of the country, who were not Jews; and they, of course, were not friendly toward the returning exiles. If the former homes of the oldest among those who were coming back to their country, were still standing, they would be in a deplorable state of repair. The beloved city of Jerusalem, along with the temple, had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the walls of the city broken down. The fire on the altar had long since ceased to burn; and it is doubtful if there were any among the returning pilgrims, who made even a pretense of worshipping God according to the law of Moses. But even so, something of the feeling of those pious sojourners, when they approached the holy precincts, may be learned from such psalms as the

Eighty-Fourth. The first seven verses of Ezra 3, will give us some idea of the conditions in Jerusalem, just prior to the laying of the foundation of the temple; and they should be read at this time.

Although the house of Jehovah itself was not available for their full service, the people of God began where they could, and did the best that they were able to do, under the circumstances. They built the altar, and conducted the worship in connection with it; and otherwise did those things which had been ordained for them. Hostile people were round about them, who caused fear to enter into their hearts; but they knew that the Lord would bless

and protect them, if they would do his will. They also provided the money and other valuable commodities, which were needed in order to obtain the necessary materials for the actual construction of the house of Jehovah. Many Christians today can learn a valuable lesson from the people in question. (Cf. Rom. 15:

4.) In many instances, the brethren have no house of worship in which to meet; but if they will show the same kind of zeal for doing what they can, that the Jews did on the occasion now before us, until they can do better, they will have both the blessings of God, and freedom from the derision of their opponents. (Cf. Tit. 2: 7, 8; 1 Pet. 2: 11, 12.)

### The Golden Text

*"The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good."* The circumstances under which Ezra spoke these words, are set forth in the context in which they are found, namely, "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us." (Ezra 8: 21-23.)

The Ahava was a small river in Babylonia, on the banks of which Ezra assembled the people who were going with him to Jerusalem, to prepare them for the journey. Ezra had expressed confidence in God, and in his gracious protection for the people; and it was his purpose to put that faith into practice. The writer of Hebrews says, "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11: 6.) This is to say that those who are acceptable to God, must believe (1) that he exists, and (2) that he will do that which he has promised.

Ezra had made known to the king his faith in God, as the object of his worship, and his confidence in both his ability and willingness to protect those who put their trust in him, as well as his power and determination to keep the evil ones from them. And when the time came for Ezra to put his faith into practice, he would have to demonstrate his faith by his works, or give the king reason to suspect either God's power to protect his people, or Ezra's confidence in that power, or both. Ezra, however, was equal to the occasion, and made certain, as nearly as he could, that he and the people were in God's favor.

The action of Ezra puts many Christians of this day to shame. They profess to believe that God can, and will bless them in many ways; but when the testing time comes, they find themselves turning in other directions for assistance. The Lord has made many promises to his people (cf. Matt. 6: 33; Rom. 8: 28; Phil. 4: 6, 7, 13, 19; Heb. 13: 5, 6); but when the testing time comes, what is their attitude toward those promises? The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to pray (Matt. 6: 9-13) begins with an effort to get those who engage in it to fix their minds on the greatness and the goodness of God; and when that is done, they should have no doubt about his ability, and his willingness, to do that which he has caused his people to ask for and expect to receive. The Lord's people, there-

fore, like Ezra, should be ashamed that they are unwilling to trust in for the people of the world to think him.

## The Text Explained

### Opposition to the Work Encountered (Ezra 4: 1-6)

*Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity were building a temple unto Jehovah, the God of Israel; then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of the fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you; for we seek your God, as ye do; and we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us in building a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even unto the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.*

Robert Jamieson, in commenting on this section of the lesson text, says, "A very interesting explanation of this passage has been recently obtained from the Assyrian sculptures. On a large cylinder, deposited in the British Museum, there is inscribed a long and perfect copy of the annals of Esar-haddon, in which the details are given of a large deportation of Israelites from Palestine, and a consequent settlement of Babylonian colonists in their place. It is a striking confirmation of the statement made in this passage." The identity of the foreigners mentioned in verse 2 is suggested by some commentators in this way: the Assyrians kings had transplanted peoples of other lands into Samaria, who intermarried with the remaining Israelites; and it was their descendants who approached Zerubbabel, with the plea that they sought

Jehovah, as the returned exiles from Babylon did. Esar-haddon's reign was some forty years after the northern kingdom was taken into captivity by the Assyrians, under Shalmaneser IV, with the help of Sargon. Esar-haddon was the only Assyrian king to live in Babylon; and he appears to have sent other colonists from that city into Samaria. This was nearly a hundred years before the final fall of Jerusalem.

It was after the foundation for the temple was laid, that the adversaries of the Jews came forward with their proposal to help in building the house of Jehovah. It is interesting to note that the king who brought these last mentioned people to Palestine, Esar-haddon, was the son and successor of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18: 13ff), and the grand of Sargon, who apparently completed Shalmaneser's three-year siege of Samaria (2 Kings 17: 1-6; Isa. 20: 1), and took the people of Israel into bondage. Esar-haddon was the father of Assurbunipal, who "is generally believed to be the great and noble Osnappar" of Ezra 4: 10. The request of the inhabitants of the land to assist in building the temple, was indignantly rejected by the Jews; who regarded them as idolaters and adversaries.

Paul and his companions in Philippi had basically the same experience, when they were preaching the gospel in that city. (See Acts 16: 16-18.) The maid with "a spirit of divination" sought to add to her testimony to that of Paul and his company, in proclaiming the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. But Paul did not want the public to get the idea, that he had any connection with evil spirits; and he promptly ordered the demon to come out of her. This attitude and determination must still characterize the Lord's people today; for God will not permit his work to be done by the joint efforts of his people, and those who are not his people. (Cf. Gen. 3: 15; 2 Cor. 6: 14-7: 1; Rev. 18: 4.)

It did not take the people whose



request to have part in building the temple long to demonstrate that they were indeed adversaries, in the true sense of the word. "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the day of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." This opposition resulted in the cessation of the work on the temple for several years. (Cf. verse 24.) It was due to the stirring appeals of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, some sixteen years later, that the work on the temple was renewed. (See Ezra 5: 1, 2; and the books which bear the two prophets' names; also the fifth and sixth chapters of Ezra.)

### The Building: Finally Completed

(Ezra 6: 15)

*And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.*

"Adar" was the name of the twelfth month of the post-exilic Jewish calendar, and corresponds to the last half of our February, and the first half of our March. The long battle with the enemies of the Lord's people regarding the building of the temple finally came to an end, when the matter came to the attention of Darius the king of Persia. The governor of the territory "beyond the River," and others with him, wanted to know "Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall?" The Lord's people gave them a polite answer; and due to the providence of God, "they did not make them cease, till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it." (See Ezra 5: 1-5.)

The governor and his companions then sent a letter to the king, as follows: "Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the providence of Judah, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls; and this work goeth on with

diligence and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? We asked them their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were at the head of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are building the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and finished. But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, Cyrus the king made a decree to build this house of God. And the gold and silver vessels also of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor; and he said unto him, Take these vessels, go, put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in its place. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundations of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not completed. Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem; and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter." (Ezra 5: 6-17.)

It did please king Darius to see to it that the search for the decree of Cyrus be made, and they found a complete copy, expressed in words which could not possibly be misunderstood, which was made known to the governor and those with him, who had written to Darius. Furthermore, king Darius ordered the governor to make available any and everything which the Jews needed, not only for the building of

the temple, but also for their daily worship at the altar; "that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savor unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons." Darius then added: "Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this: and the God that hath caused his name to dwell there overthrow all kings and peoples that shall put forth their hand to alter the same, to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with all diligence." (Read Ezra 6: 1-12.) The governor exercised diligence in seeing to it that the king's orders were promptly obeyed, and the way was clear to bring to a completion the building of the temple. "And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo."

It was pointed out in an earlier lesson that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were one and the same person. He, along with Ezra and Nehemiah, were the great restorers of the Lord's work, which had been practically destroyed by the sin of the Lord's people and their captivity. Zerubbabel is credited with rebuilding the temple; Nehemiah, with rebuilding the walls of the city of Jerusalem; and Ezra, with restoring the word of the Lord to the people and the worship which Jehovah had ordained. But it appears that Ezra, in the providence of God, came from Babylon to Jerusalem, to do more than to recall the returned exiles back to the word of God, and to a renewed spiritual life; he was in the Jewish capital to do a work, without which we probably would not have the Old Testament in its present form today. It is generally recognized by Bible students, that it was under the leadership of Ezra that the Old Testament Canon was revised and completed. That great work was undertaken by a group of one hundred and twenty Hebrew scholars, known as *The Great Synagogue*, with Ezra as its president. The men of this synagogue were also referred to as "the successors of

the prophets." The days of the Old Testament prophets were about over, and the silence which followed Malachi, was not broken for some four hundred years—not until the voice of John the Baptist was heard in the wilderness of Judaea, calling the people of Israel to repentance. (See any good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia on *The Great Synagogue*.)

Rebuilding has been the work of all faithful servants of the Lord, since the devil, through the serpent, was responsible for the devastation wrought in the garden of Eden; and we, in this day, are no exception to this general rule. A main feature of our work for the Lord, is to bring together the scattered stones, which have been blasted from their places by the errors and follies of men; and try to restore them to the places where they belong. And if we should feel that rebuilding is beneath our desert, we may well consider that even God's greatest work, has been that of redemption, rather than creation. Any thoughtful observer can readily see something of the havoc which has come to the church of the Lord; and it is safe to say that the work of rebuilding will never be completed, as long as time continues. This should give us some idea of the magnitude of the task which is before us.

#### **The Dedication of the Temple and the Restoration of Its Service**

(Ezra 6: 16-18)

*And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.*

It is interesting, by way of contrast, to see what happened at the dedication of the first temple, popularly known as the temple of Solomon. The sacred historian, after having recorded the king's dedicatory prayer, says, "And the king,

and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before Jehovah. And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto Jehovah, two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of Jehovah. The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of Jehovah; for there he offered the burnt-offering, and the meal-offering, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brazen altar that was before Jehovah was too little to receive the burnt-offering, and the meal-offering, and the fat of the peace-offerings. So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from the entrance of Hamath unto the brook of Egypt, before Jehovah our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that Jehovah had showed unto David his servant, and to Israel his people." (1 Kings 8: 62-66.)

When all the facts are taken into consideration, it appears that the temple of Zerubbabel was somewhat larger than the one which was built by Solomon; but the former evidently lacked the glory which belonged to the latter. Smith's Bible Dictionary notes that "from these dimensions we gather, that if 'the priests and Levites and elders of families were disconsolate at seeing how much more sumptuous the old temple was than the one which on account of their poverty they had just been able to erect' (Ezra 3: 12; Josephus, Ant. 11: 4, 2), it certainly was not because it was smaller, as

almost every dimension had been increased one third; but it may have been that the carving and the gold, and other ornaments of Solomon's temple far surpassed this, and the pillars of the portico and the veils may all have been far more splendid, so also probably were the vessels; and all this is what a Jew would mourn over far more than mere architectural splendor." (Vol. IV, p. 3202.)

Adam Clarke supposes that the inferiority of the second temple, was also due to the lack of the ark of the covenant, the heavenly fire, the mercy-seat, the heavenly manna, Aaron's rod that budded, the Schechinah, the spirit of prophecy, and most likely the Urim and Thummim. But the prophet Haggai sought to comfort the mourners, but assuring them that the glory of the latter house, would eventually exceed that of the former; because of the coming of the Lord, that is, Christ Jesus, to it, and filling it with his glory. (See Hag. 2: 1-9.) This should be enough to show us, that what is sometimes looked upon as "inferior" may, after all, become the greatest, especially, if we will allow God to have his way with us.

We also should learn from the facts which we have considered, to do our best to rebuild our heritage, after we have all but failed with our first opportunities. The Lord will always give any person, who will try, a further chance to make good in this life; but delay to take hold of the new opportunity, may prove fatal to him. This does not mean that the person with the second opportunity can always rise to the heights of his original possibilities; but it does mean that he can be saved, and that is the greatest blessing of all!

## Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

### Introduction

About how many captives came to Jerusalem when they were granted the privilege of going so?

What kind of a situation faced them when they reached their homeland?

What did the people do when they reached Jerusalem?

What lesson should we learn from them?

### The Golden Text

Under what circumstances did Ezra speak the words of the golden text?

What did he do before they began their long journey to Jerusalem?

What lesson should we learn from his attitude and conduct?

### Opposition to the Work Encountered

Who were the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin and what did they first do?

What motive did they offer for their action in requesting to have part in the work?

How did the Lord's people react to their offer and why?  
 In what way did Paul deal with a similar situation in his day?  
 How should the Lord's people today feel and act about such matters?  
 What did the adversaries do to show their real character?  
 What effect did their opposition have on the work of rebuilding the temple?

#### The Building Finally Completed

When was the work on the house of Jehovah finished?  
 Under what circumstance did the opposition to the work cease?  
 What was the king's reaction when he heard about conditions, as made known in the letter?  
 Who were the principal leaders of the Jews, at the time of this lesson, and what did each accomplish?  
 What place does the work of "rebuilding" have in the life of the average Christian?  
 How should we feel about such work?

#### The Dedication of the Temple and the Restoration of Its Service

How did the dedication of the temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel compare with each other?  
 How did the two temples themselves compare with each other?  
 Why, apparently, did the temple of Zerubbabel lack the glory which characterized Solomon's?  
 How, seemingly, did the people in Jerusalem feel about the difference?  
 Who was Haggai and what did he do to comfort the mourners on that occasion?  
 How, then, would the temple of Zerubbabel exceed the glory of the one built by Solomon?  
 What lesson should we learn from this?  
 How should we regard our opportunities to rebuild our heritage?  
 How does the Lord feel toward his people in this respect?  
 What can the sincere and dedicated child of God always look forward to in this respect?  
 What effect should all of this have on every thoughtful child of God?