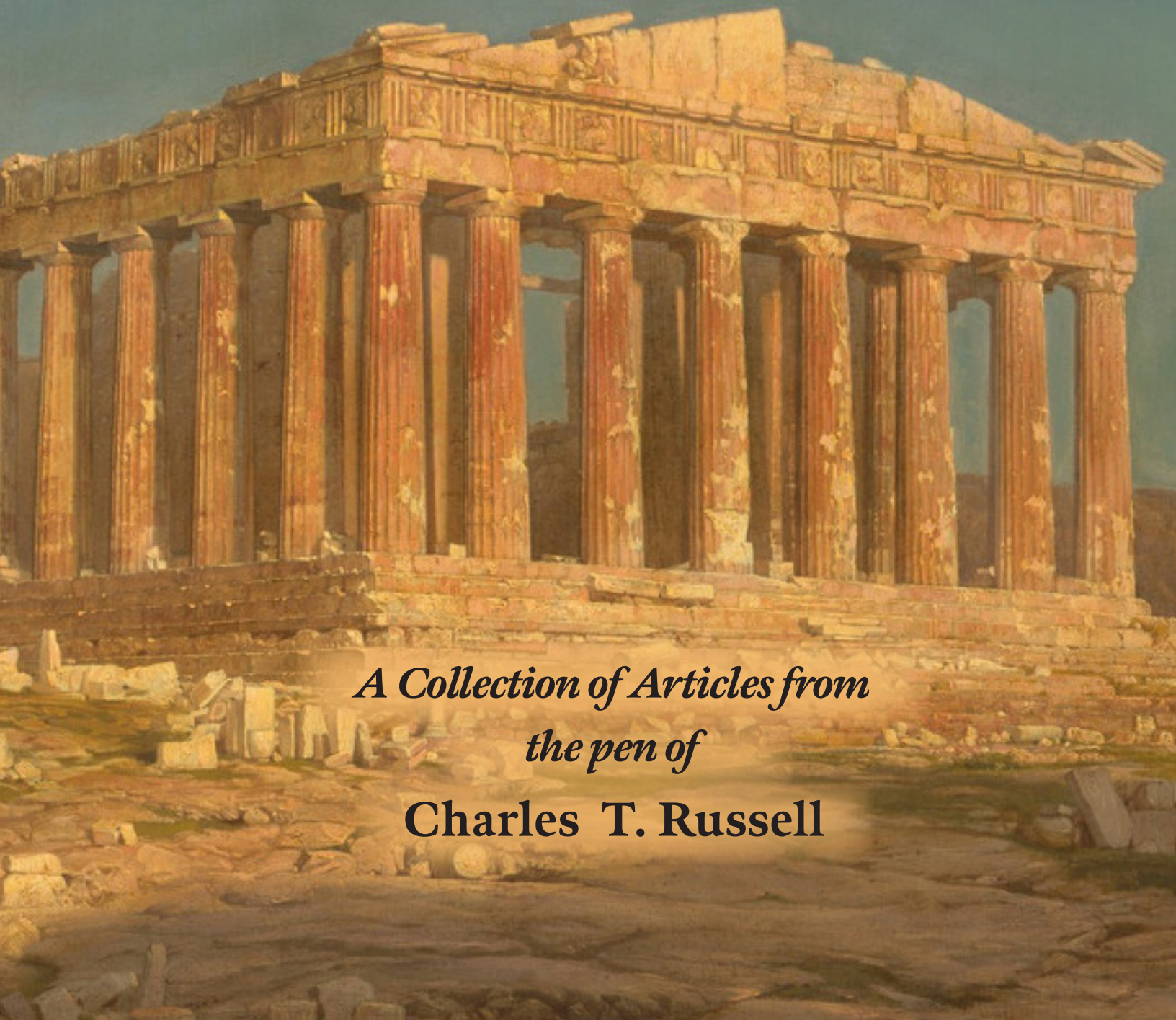
THE ACTS

OF

The Apostles



A Collection of Articles from the pen of

Charles T. Russell

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The Acts of The Apostles

presents a valuable account of the doings of the Apostles after their anointing with the Holy Spirit, of the establishment of the Christian Church, and of the first preaching of the good news to the Gentiles.

St. Luke is the author of this Book, which some have described as the best of all Church histories. As the record closes abruptly, before the death of St. Paul, it is but reasonably supposed that the Book was finished about A.D. 63. The first verse of the book alludes to his previously written work, the Gospel by St. Luke, in which he set forth what Jesus began to do and to teach. There is a bare suggestion that the writer had in mind that his present treatise related to a continuation of our Lord's work by his holy Spirit through his apostles and followers. This standpoint of view given is a glorious sweep or vista and connects up the work which our Lord began at Jordan and finished at Calvary, and has since been carrying on by his Spirit and through his Church, and will continue to the consummation of the Church, which is his Body, and its glorification in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom blessing then to go forth to the blessing and uplifting of man. The small beginning, the trials and triumphs of the work, are yet to yield the abundant fruitage expressed in the declaration that unto Jesus every knee must bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God, the Father.

The apostles, although unlearned men, were evidently strong characters, and under the Lord's teaching their lack of worldly wisdom and education was more than compensated for in "the spirit of a sound mind." It is not strange, therefore, that these men were uniformly recognized by the early Church as guides in the way of the Lord --- specially appointed instructors --- "pillars in the Church," next in authority to the Lord himself. In various ways the Lord prepared them for this position:

They were with him continually and could, therefore, be witnesses respecting all the affairs of his ministry, his teachings, his miracles, his prayers, his sympathy, his holiness, his self-sacrifice even unto death, and, finally, witnesses of his resurrection. Not only did the early Church need all these testimonies, but all who have since been called of the Lord and have accepted his call to the New Creation --- all who have fled for refuge and are trusting in the glorious hopes centered in his character, in his sacrificial death, in his high exaltation and in the plan of God he is to fulfill --- needed just such personal testimony in respect to all these matters, to the intent that they might have strong faith, strong consolation.

> They are still preaching to us, still instructing the faithful, still encouraging, still admonishing, still reproving. Their death did not stop their ministry. They still speak, still witness, are still mouthpieces of the Lord to his faithful.
>
> *-- Charles T. Russell*

R. 1145, R. 4304, F213 and F216

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A Benediction and Commission

THE CHURCH'S ORDINATION – R. 5587
Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-49

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." – Matthew 28:20

TODAY'S Study relates to the commission, or authorization of service, which Jesus appointed to His Church in His discourses during the forty days following His resurrection. First we have the Master's words on the evening after His journey with two of His disciples to the village of Emmaus, near Jerusalem. Then we have a part of the general commission which Jesus gave just before He parted from His disciples and was received up into Heaven.

The lessons of that journey to Emmaus and of subsequent appearances must have been very valuable to all the followers of Christ at that time. He said, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you [while I was yet the Man Christ Jesus, before My resurrection change], how all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

The Evangelist sums up in few words conversation and Scriptural exposition which probably occupied at least an hour. We are not told what these expositions were which opened their eyes of understanding, but we can surmise. He probably explained to them the significance of the Passover lamb that was killed at that time of the year, and showed that He was the Antitype of that lamb. He probably explained to them the true significance of the Passover – that in the type the first-born of Israel were passed over, and subsequently represented by the tribe of Levi, including the priests; and that the antitype of these first-borns is the Church of the First-borns, whose names are written in Heaven – all the saintly followers of Jesus who will be of the Royal Priesthood, and the antitypical Levites, their servants, in the work of the world's uplift during Messiah's Kingdom.

The Master doubtless also gave them some suggestions respecting the antitypical Atonement Day and "the better sacrifices" – that He Himself began "the better sacrifices," which would be continued in His disciples; and that, the sacrifices being finished, the Atonement blessings would go forth from the High Priest to all the earth, during Messiah's Kingdom of a thousand years.

POWER FROM ON HIGH PROMISED

Whatever features of the great Plan the Master unfolded, we have the assurance that His auditors were deeply interested. Their sadness disappeared. Their first thoughts were merely that they had lost their blessed Master, His counsels, His instructions; but now, through this enlightenment, their hearts burned with a fresh inspiration of knowledge. They saw heights, depths, lengths and breadths that they had never dreamed of in God's Plan. They saw that the death of Jesus was necessary for the carrying out of all the hopes and prospects inspired by the promises of God. They saw that they themselves were privileged also, not only to suffer with Him, but also to be glorified.

The concluding part of the Master's Message on that occasion was, "Behold, I send the

promise of My Father upon you." The Father had promised in various types that the Church, the Bride of Christ, would receive the Holy Spirit from Jesus, their Head. It was typified, for instance, in the holy oil which, poured upon the head of Aaron, typifying Jesus, flowed down upon the body of Aaron, typifying the anointing of the Church.

This promise of the Divine acceptance of the Church was all-important. Without it the disciples would have no commission, and could not be ambassadors for God. Jesus indeed had sent out The Twelve, and afterwards the Seventy; but they were His personal representatives, and He had given them of His own spirit, His own power, by which they worked miracles, cast out devils, etc. But they had never been recognized of the Father. As we read, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.) They must wait for this begetting and anointing of the Holy Spirit. It alone could imbue or qualify them for the Divine service – to be God's ambassadors and representatives.

"LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY"

St. Matthew's account of our Lord's benediction upon His disciples and His commissioning of them to declare His Message, is full of interest to us. By His appointment the Eleven met Him in a mountain in Galilee. For a few moments only He appeared to them. They worshiped, some fully convinced, others wavering. It was for the convincing of such waverers that Jesus remained during the forty days. And we are sure that He fully accomplished His work of convincing the Eleven; for they were all of one heart and one mind when they waited in the upper room for the Pentecostal blessing.

Jesus came near to them, and declared that full authority had been given unto Him in respect to both Heavenly things and earthly things. Unless they could realize this, it would be impossible for them properly to represent Him before the world. He had not this power and authority previously, during His earthly ministry. He was then in process of trial as respects His faithful loyalty even unto death, even unto the death of the cross. But after He had demonstrated His loyalty, the Father had raised Him from the dead to a glorious fullness of power. He was thus declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead. He wished His disciples to know that He was no longer under the human limitations or under the limitations of the Death Covenant. That work He had finished. He had entered into the blessing, the reward. He had experienced His change and now had all power, not only in respect to earthly things, but also in respect to Heavenly things.

Prophecy had declared that unto Him all would bow, both those in Heaven and those on earth. He had entered into the condition where this prophecy would soon begin to be fulfilled. He had ascended up on High, where all the angels worshiped, gave heed to Him as the Father's exalted One. Not yet is the latter part of the promise fulfilled – that all on earth should bow to Him. The time for such a recognition will be during His Messianic Kingdom of a thousand years. As now, all who come to a true knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God gladly bow their knee to Him as the Father's Representative, so gladly the world will come to recognize the Only Begotten and render obedience to Him.

Eventually every knee shall bow and every tongue confess; for, according to the Divine arrangement all who fail to appreciate the glorified Son of God at that time will be destroyed – counted unworthy of any further blessings and favor of God, who has bestowed upon Christ all the blessings which He designs for the fallen race.

"GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH"

Here is the commission. Primarily it belonged to the eleven Apostles, but subsequently it included St. Paul, who took the place of Judas and who was "not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles." (2 Corinthians 11:5.)

The Apostles, and they alone, are authorized as mouthpieces of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church to the world. All that has been told us of Apostolic Bishops being successors of The Twelve is false, unscriptural. They had no successors; they are with us yet. The Master's Message through them is given us in the New Testament, of which one of them wrote, "The Word of God is sufficient, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished." (2 Timothy 3:16,17.) To the Apostles was given the great work of inaugurating the Church. They were endued with the power at Pentecost.

But while Jesus appointed especially the Twelve Apostles to be His mouthpieces to the Church, and declared that whatsoever they would bind on earth we might know was bound in Heaven, and that whatsoever they would declare was not bound on earth was not bound in the sight of Heaven, nevertheless the Lord arranged that each member of the Church should be His representative, and that each in proportion to his opportunity and ability might have a share in proclaiming the Gospel Message. Whoever receives the Spirit of begetting, the anointing, is included in the statement of Isa. 61:1-3 as a member of the Body of Christ, under the anointed Head, Jesus.

Thus we read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath appointed Me to bind up the broken-hearted," etc. Everyone who receives the Holy Spirit is thus ordained, or authorized, to preach, according to his or her opportunity or limitation of circumstances or conditions. One limitation of the Apostle is that the sisters are not to teach in public. (1 Tim. 2:12.) Nevertheless there are plenty of opportunities for all.

Evidently, therefore, a great mistake has been made in the arrangement of a clergy class, who declare themselves to be the only ones who are ordained, or authorized, to preach or to teach God's Message. Jesus and the Apostles knew nothing of a clergy class or of a laity class. On the contrary, our Lord declared, "All ye are brethren; and One is your Master, even Christ." And the Master and His twelve Apostles especially forbade anything approaching a lordship amongst His followers, anything like a clerical class.

THE CHURCH'S COMMISSION

The Message given is, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples from all nations." The commission is not to make the nations disciples, but, as elsewhere expressed, to gather out of all nations those willing to be disciples of Christ, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, noble or base. A disciple of Christ is a follower, one who learns, one who copies. Jesus defined this discipleship, saying, "If any man will come after Me [be My disciple], let him deny himself [set himself aside, ignore himself, his talent, his will, his wealth, his everything – discipleship first], and let him take up his cross and follow Me."

The intimation is that all true followers of Christ, all true disciples, will find the path in which the Lord will lead a difficult one, in which their own wills must be continually crossed, opposed – a way in which they will continually have difficulty according to the flesh. However, the promise is that eventually, "Where I am [in Heaven or in Kingdom glory], there shall My disciple be."

While the Church of Christ has properly viewed water immersion as a symbol of death to the world, death to self, and of rising to newness of life as members of Christ, the Body of Christ, nevertheless the water baptism is only a picture of the true. So here it is stated that our commission is not water baptism, but baptism into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "Into the name of" signifies into accord with, into fellowship with. All of Christ's disciples are to recognize the Father's name as standing for righteousness; and they are to become dead to every other principle than that which His name represents, and to

be thoroughly immersed into that name of righteousness, justice, truth.

Ignoring all other names, such as Lutherans or Wesleyans or Calvinists, or State Church names, such as Roman Catholics or Anglican Catholics or Greek Catholics, these are to be thoroughly immersed into the name of Christ and to recognize His name and to be His members, His Body, His Church. Furthermore, they are to be immersed into the name of, the recognition of, the Holy Spirit – their own spirit, their own wills being dead. Their own aims, hopes and prospects are to be ignored. God's holy will, God's mind, God's holy purpose, are to be their will and purpose.

Thus we see our commission as respects all people of all nations who have an ear to hear our Message. We are to make them disciples and to immerse them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Jesus commands. This is the extent of our authority. We are not to organize human systems and to call them kingdoms, churches, or other names. We are merely to prepare the followers of Jesus, cooperating with God, who will work in them to will and to do His good pleasure.

"UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD"

"And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." His words have been understood to signify that the world is to come to an end; whereas what the Master really said, according to the Greek, is that He would be with His people, even to the end of the Age – down to the time when this Gospel Age will have accomplished its Divinely purposed mission of gathering out a sufficient number of disciples of Christ to complete the Divine purpose – until the Gospel Message shall have accomplished the sanctification through obedience to the Truth of a proper number to complete the Bride of Christ in glory, the Royal Priesthood. Then the end of the Age will come. Then will come the Master Himself, to gather His Elect, to glorify them with Himself, to establish His Kingdom, to bless the world of mankind – the non-elect.

Acts Chapter 1

The Ascension by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
Acts 1:9

TARRYING UNTIL ENDUED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH – R. 2924

ACTS 1:1-11

"While he blessed them he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." – Luke 24:51

Luke, the physician, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, was the author of the Book of Acts. In the latter he takes up the narrative substantially where he left it in the Gospel – the ascension of Christ. He recapitulates, however, to the extent of giving us a narrative of the conversation immediately preceding our Lord's ascension. The account is evidently addressed to a friend, of the then common name, Theophilus, who was supposed to have been a person of considerable dignity and influence, inasmuch as he is elsewhere styled "most excellent," a title which implied a considerable social or political rank. Luke was not one of the apostles, and his records are not, therefore of apostolic authority. Such authority or plenary inspiration was not necessary, however, in the recording of plain, simple facts such as the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts present. It requires no inspiration to record a fact, though it does require some ability, and it is reasonable to assume that since the Lord used Luke's abilities in connection with the work of recording the facts of that time he was ***guided*** of the holy spirit in the ***ascertainment of the facts***, which his education and natural talents eminently qualified him to state succinctly. Luke was guided of the holy spirit, in the same sense that all of the Lord's consecrated people are guided by his spirit, which is to a different degree from that ***plenary*** inspiration granted to the twelve apostles – Paul taking the place of Judas.

The first verse refers back to the Gospel of Luke, as a treatise of the doings and teaching of Jesus from the time he began his ministry to its close; and some have assumed that the word "began" might reasonably be understood to imply that our Lord continued his ministry after his ascension, speaking and acting, through his apostles, and those believing on him through their word. This is true enough whether it was what Luke meant or not; for the Scriptures invariably teach that the Church of Christ in the flesh is his representative: as the Apostle Paul says, we "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church." (Col. 1:24.) And as we have to do with the suffering of the anointed one, so we have to do with the witnessing or ministry by which the members of the body are to be called out from the world, separated, instructed, and thus prepared for a share in the glorious Kingdom and the great work of judging the world, which it will inaugurate. It is in this sense that our Lord declared, "Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Primarily, the apostles were the witnesses who testified to us respecting our Lord's words, his death, his resurrection and ascension, and His promises of a return to accept his faithful to a share in his kingdom, when he shall take unto himself his great power and reign. In a secondary sense all who receive the apostolic testimony and declare the same to others are likewise Christ's representatives and witnesses.

It was in order that the apostles might fill this position of witnesses, and might be enabled to give us, and all, a clear testimony on the important subject of Christ's death and resurrection and ascension, which constitute the foundations for hope, that our Lord was present with them after his resurrection, and, as Luke declares, demonstrated the fact of his resurrection by "infallible proofs" – explaining to them meanwhile things pertaining to the coming Kingdom, for which he had already taught them to hope and to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and a share in the throne which he had already declared would be for the faithful. This explanation respecting the Kingdom was necessary, because, as Jews, they had properly looked for an earthly Kingdom, and now needed to be informed that before

the earthly Kingdom could be established a heavenly Kingdom must first be inaugurated; and that they were eligible to a place in the heavenly Kingdom, through which, in due time, the blessing would come to an earthly Kingdom, and ultimately extend to all the families of the earth. This information was not due to them so long as the old or Jewish dispensation remained – up to the time of our Lord's death. It would only be "meat in due season" after the Jewish nation, through its representatives, the priests and doctors of the law, had rejected Christ and crucified him. But now that the new dispensation was fully inaugurated, it was "meat in due season" to the faithful to know that God, having rejected fleshly Israel from being his peculiar people, for a time, to gather a spiritual Israel, to be the holy nation, the peculiar people, the royal priesthood, to show forth his praise, and to constitute his chief agents for the blessing of the world in due time. This work of calling the spiritual Israelites, and of inducting such as would heed the call into the new relationship, was the work being committed to the apostles – the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, which our Lord unfolded to the disciples in such measure as they were able to appreciate them – leaving to the future the work of guiding them into all truth, into the deep things of God, under the ministration of the holy spirit, which he had previously promised would show them things to come. – John 16:13.

Our Lord wished the apostles to distinctly understand that they were not then in the condition to undertake the new work, and that the proper time for action had not yet come – that they would not be prepared until they should receive the holy spirit, a power and unction from the Father, which would specially qualify, enable and guide them in the important service of their commission. Moreover, it would be to them, and to all believers through them, a divine evidence or attestation; first, respecting our Lord's work, that it was approved of the Father, and constituted a basis of reconciliation by which sinners might return to harmony with their Creator; and evidence, further, to those consecrating themselves to the divine service, and receiving the holy spirit, that they were accepted of the Father in the Beloved, and owned as children and heirs of his promises, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they would suffer with him that they might also be glorified together, in the Kingdom, when the due time should come. – Rom. 8:16-17.

It was appropriate at this time, and in view of the Lord's instructions respecting the Kingdom and the preparatory work for it, which the apostles were commissioned to do, that they should wonder and inquire respecting the time of its establishment; and not knowing that he was about to leave them, they inquired respecting the ancient promises of Israel's restoration, whether or not these were now due to be fulfilled – whether or not Israel was to be released from the domination of the Romans, and to become the great nation of the world, and to be used of God in the blessing of other nations.

It is worthy of careful note that our Lord did not rebuke the apostles, nor tell them that the thoughts represented in their question were foolish, and would never have a realization. On the contrary, his answer clearly implies that their expectations at least approximated the truth; but that as respected the time of their fulfillment He was not at liberty to gratify their curiosity. The things they referred to, which God had promised, would be fulfilled in due course, but the times and the seasons were not for them to know, the Father retaining them in his own power, not being pleased as yet to reveal this feature of his plan. Our Lord, however, clearly indicates that before the restoration of Israel to divine favor must come in the mission of his apostles, to which he was now appointing them. He would not inform them whether their mission would be quickly accomplished or not, but as a matter of fact, we see that it has already extended over more than eighteen centuries. The restoration of

Israel to divine favor cannot take place until Christ, and his apostles, and all his faithful, shall first have accomplished the work of witnessing to the world, and of selecting the full complete number of the "elect" – spiritual Israel. This is the work of chief concern: the times and seasons for the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel after the flesh, and to the world, are to be left in God's power, with the assurance that when the due time shall come the brethren shall not be in darkness on this subject, but be guided by the holy spirit into this and all other truths, as they become meat in due season for the household of faith.

The witnessing properly began at Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, which God himself had chosen, as represented in the Temple. It properly began with those who had knowledge of Jesus and his crucifixion, – amongst whom were the most devout Jews from all quarters of the earth. It was appropriate that the truth respecting our Lord's resurrection and ascension and glorification with the Father, and respecting the gathering of spiritual Israel, and our Lord's second coming to receive them and to exalt them with himself in the Messianic Kingdom, should be declared to those who had been witnesses and instigators of his ignominious death.

This, like the other features of the Gospel, is totally unlike anything else known in history. Never before, either in fact or in conjecture, did people ascribe divine honors to one who had been put to death as a criminal. Worldly sentiments would be to the contrary of this, as being unwise, and wholly unlikely to appeal to the sentiments of the people. And further, worldly wisdom, even if it had adopted as a leader one who had been publicly executed as a criminal, would never have thought of beginning the testimony close to the scenes of the ignominy, but would have gone afar off to proclaim that an innocent one had been betrayed and unjustly sacrificed. God so arranged the matter that the truth should stand forth for acceptance or rejection by the Jews in the most unfavorable light, so that only those who were Israelites indeed, and ready to sacrifice every earthly advantage as Jews, and to make themselves of no reputation, and thus take up their cross and follow the Lamb, – these alone would be appealed to, or incline to follow the cause of Jesus – defamed as a Nazarene and as a malefactor, and as specially cursed, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth upon a tree." Thus would the Lord hedge his cause about, and keep out of it, through unpopularity, as well as by subsequent persecutions, all who were not Israelites indeed: – thus the Church was kept, not only free from doctrinal errors, but also comparatively free from tares, until the apostles fell asleep, and the enemy came in and sowed tares amongst the wheat. – Matt. 13:25.

The witnessing has progressed, until at the present time at least a cursory knowledge of the facts upon which the Lord's message is based obtains throughout the habitable world. This fact of itself, if there were no other evidences, would seem to imply that the witnessing time had about expired, and hence that the object of the Gospel age had about been accomplished in the selection of the full elect number of the faithful witnesses, and that their work of blessing the world would soon be due. The expression, "Unto the uttermost parts of the earth," is not to be understood as implying every quarter of the globe, but rather a term of that day corresponding in meaning to our present expression, "everywhere."

Apparently much misapprehension prevails today respecting the character of the testimony or witnessing to be done. Many of those who preach and of those who hear have lost sight of the real message, the real witnessing, and especially rejoice in and promulgate other gospels – evolution, science, philosophy, human uplift, political regeneration, churchianity, socialism, etc. They may think that they are witnessing in harmony with the Lord's direction, but we cannot assent to this. The Lord's disciples were to bear witness to him, and not to themselves nor to human institutions; they were to bear witness to his

testimony respecting the Kingdom, and not to bear witness to various human theories, snares and sophistries. It is well that all who are inquiring for the "old paths," in which the apostles followed the Lamb, should note this point, and should see to it that their daily witnessing, in word and in deed, testified of Jesus; of the fact that he is a living Savior, whose power, through his word and spirit, works in his followers to will and to do his good pleasure, and to show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light; out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son, which Kingdom they are to hope for and to wait and prepare for, to the intent that they may be meet for this, "the inheritance of the saints in light."

The instruction that they should tarry, and not begin this work of witnessing until endued with power from on high in a few days, implied their unfitness for the work as natural men; and we see abundant evidence of this in many respects. The narrative is that they were men of humble birth and limited education – "unlearned men" – and this was apparent in some respects, even after they received the holy spirit, for their friends, as well as their enemies, bore witness to it, while acknowledging also their ability under the new conditions. The Apostle Paul, who took the place of Judas, as one of the twelve, being a talented and learned man, did not, we may suppose, show forth the peculiar powers of the holy spirit so remarkably as the other eleven, who were unlearned. He had the holy spirit in equal measure, or, indeed, we may say, that because of his natural abilities and talents he was enabled to enjoy and use in the service a still larger measure of the holy spirit than the others; but this power of God, working in him, would not be so manifest to the observer as in the case of the unlearned, because the divine wisdom and power would to some extent be accredited to his natural ability and talents. Herein, then, we see another manifestation of the divine wisdom in so selecting the twelve foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14), as to demonstrate to all that the truth, as presented, was not of their concoction and elaboration. And yet it was needful to have amongst the apostles a man of learning, qualified to be an able minister of the truth, and to present it under the direction and guidance of the holy spirit in such a manner as to be a further testimony that the truths declared were of divine origin, and worthy of all acceptation.

While claiming that the twelve apostles were unique, separate, distinct, in the divine plan, from all the other members of the Church, we believe, nevertheless, that the divine plan of operation in respect to the general work is outlined in this, our Lord's declaration, "Tarry – until ye be endued with power from on high" – before participating in any sense of the word in public witnessing. Our thought is, that while all men may properly be called to repentance, reformation of life, temperance and every good work, and may be called to faith in Christ, as the Great Redeemer, nevertheless, none are called to be ***God's witnesses***, mouth-pieces, representatives, ambassadors, etc., except those who have gone still further, and recognizing themselves as bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, have made full consecration of their every power and talent to the Lord and to his service. These consecrated ones should then wait until they experience something of the divine power working in themselves to will, and, as far as possible, to do the Lord's good pleasure, before beginning to bear witness to others.

And the Lord's sheep should be careful to select as leaders, etc., only such as give evidence of having come under the influence of the holy anointing of the spirit of God. And this, no matter how much of natural ability the would-be leader may possess; indeed, the more his natural ability the more danger from his leading. Only those anointed of the spirit are to be recognized amongst the Lord's people as in any sense of the word representatives and mouth-pieces of the head.

As it was the spirit of the Lord God upon our Lord Jesus that anointed or qualified him to preach the Gospel, so it must be the same anointing received of him that will qualify any for this service of preaching or witnessing, in a manner that will be acceptable to the Lord and profitable to his flock. (Isa. 61:1.) All who are not in the attitude of full consecration to the Lord, full submission to the divine will, are in opposition, to some extent; and to the extent that they are in opposition they are wrong, or wicked. "And unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to take my words into thy mouth, seeing that thou hatest instruction (refusing to submit themselves to the Lord's arrangement) and castest my words behind thee [neglectfully]?" – Psa. 50:17.

The narrative is brief, and we cannot even conjecture how amply the Lord discussed these matters with the disciples, but when he had explained them amply – or at least to the extent that they (the holy spirit not yet having come upon them) were able then to receive instruction – he was taken from them up into a cloud, gradually receding until lost to their sight.

This matter of our Lord's ascension was evidently arranged, as were all the other features of his manifestations to the disciples after his resurrection, with a view to the establishment of their faith as natural men; and with the view to the establishment of the faith of all other natural men who might be seeking a basis of faith in this witnessing. As we have already seen, our Lord at this time was quickened in spirit, and not in the flesh. (1 Pet. 3:18.) Yet he was appearing in the flesh, even as angels have ofttimes in the past appeared as men. These appearances in different bodies were not deceptions, but demonstrations of a fact – the fact that he was no longer dead, but alive. They were demonstrations in the best manner possible, because as natural men they could not see a spirit being without injury to their sight, and without a corresponding trepidation, which would have quite disqualified them for cool reflection and for instruction such as our Lord wished to impart.

The two men in white apparel who suddenly appeared in their midst were unquestionably angels, manifested in human form. It was no more a deception of the disciples for the angels to appear as men than it was when the Lord appeared as a man. Again the object desired was better served by this manner of appearing, than if they had been miraculously enabled to see two shining beings, bright above the brightness of the sun at noonday, upon whom they could not have looked, and before whom they would have fallen, as dead men. But beholding them as men, yet knowing from their glistening garments, etc., that they were really spirit beings manifested in the flesh, the disciples were able to control their feelings, so as to receive their message, – "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

This was a suitable conclusion to the wonderful series of events of those forty days. It furnished a miraculous heavenly attestation that their senses had not been deceived – that their Master, "changed," had really been with them, appearing in various forms during these forty days, and that he had now gone from them. It consoled them, too, in reminding them that he had not left them forever, but had already promised them that he would come again and receive them unto himself. This evidently was the hope of their hearts through coming dreary days and dark hours of tribulation, persecution, defamation and suffering. They not only endured, as seeing him who is invisible, but as servants who hope for and wait for the return of their Lord, and the nuptial feast and Kingdom blessings then to be instituted.

We find this longing for and hoping for and waiting for the coming King in the writings of all the apostles. It is John who exclaims, "Come, Lord Jesus!" It is James who says,

"Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." It is Peter who encourages the brethren, by pointing out that shortly, when the Chief Shepherd will appear, they shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away. It is Jude, who speaks of the Lord's coming, with myriads of his holy ones. It is Paul who urges faithfulness, and assures the brethren that not only himself, but all who love his appearing, shall then receive a crown of righteousness. – Rev. 22:20; Jas. 5:7; 1 Pet. 5:4; Jude 14; 2 Tim. 4:8.

And if this hope so encouraged, strengthened and upheld the early Christian Church, should its influence be less today, upon us who remember that "now is our ***salvation nearer*** than when we first believed?" Nay, verily! Indeed, when the light of present truth, shining on the pathway, shows us that he who was to come has come, and has not tarried – that the promises of God through the prophets, written aforetime for our admonition, are fulfilled; that we are living in the harvest-time of this age; that the Chief Reaper is present; that the gathering of the "wheat" into the barn, and the bundling of the "tares," for the coming fiery troubles, is in progress; and when, the eyes of our understanding being opened, we see these things in evidence about us, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy joy and faithfulness, and courage, and zeal; – to be, to do, to endure, whatsoever things our present Lord and Master, in his infinite wisdom and love, may mark out for us! As he declared, "The cup which the Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" So may we, with implicit confidence, say that whatever cup of experience our present Lord and Head may pour for us, his disciples, we will cheerfully partake thereof, and thus fill up the afflictions which are behind; and shortly, with all the faithful, enter into the glories of the Millennial Kingdom, which God hath in reservation for them that love him.

We have already commented upon the expression, "In like manner as ye have seen him go,"* pointing out that the manner was not a noisy one – not with either worldly or celestial commotion; – that the world was in ignorance of our Lord's going, so that only his faithful few recognized the fact, and that in like manner he will come again, unknown to the world, without commotion; – that his presence will be known only to the faithful ones, whose eyes of understanding are being opened; – until, having gathered his elect, his presence will be manifested to the world gradually in the symbolical flaming fire of the great time of trouble – in the overthrow of present institutions, preparatory to the establishment of the Kingdom of light and love.

**Studies in The Scriptures*, Vol. II., P.153.

The disciples apparently abode together in Jerusalem, where they were all comparative strangers, their home being in Galilee. Our Lord's mother, and others of the faithful sisters, were of the company, who, in harmony with the Lord's promise, waited at Jerusalem for power from on high. Doubtless those days of waiting were not only essential to the going of our Lord into the Father's presence and the presentation before him of the merits of the ransom sacrifice, and the application of these for the benefit of mankind, but the time was necessary also for the development of the apostles – in faith and trust, through the influence of the promises the Lord had left them. It required some time for them to consider and to reason over the wonderful things they had heard from the Master's lips, and thus to get their hearts into the condition where they would be best prepared for the blessings they were expecting.

Hope is a valuable factor in Christian development still, although the object of the hope may vary from time to time. For instance, we are no longer hoping for the Pentecostal blessing, believing that it came at the time appointed, and that it has been with the Church, as a Church, ever since; and that we, in becoming united to the Lord, come under this blessed influence of the holy spirit.

But while that hope has reached fruition other hopes have taken its place in our case. We are waiting also; not waiting, as the groaning creation is waiting, "for the manifestation of the sons of God," either; but we are waiting for our adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body – the body of Christ, which we trust will shortly be completed, and ourselves be amongst those who will be "changed" to be of it. (Rom. 8:23.) What an anchor to our souls is this hope! How it makes all other interests and affairs of life comparatively insignificant! Wealth and fame, and all the things which the human heart can desire and appreciate, grand and good as some of them are, pale before this grand epiphania (bright-shining) in which we, as members of the body of Christ, hope soon to share.

OUR LORD'S ASCENSION – R. 1828

LUKE 24:44-53

"And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

WHILE all who are still true to the sure foundation of the Christian faith and have not been moved away from the hope of the gospel recognize the necessity of Christ's death as the payment of our ransom, and see in his resurrection the pledge of salvation to all them that believe, few seem to consider what was accomplished for us and also for himself by his ascension. Yet this was a feature of the divine plan as necessary to our salvation as were the sacrifice and the resurrection.

This feature of the plan is clearly shown in the service of the typical tabernacle. It corresponds to the act of the high priest, Aaron, in entering the Most Holy with the blood of the atonement sacrifice and presenting it before the Mercy Seat together with the sweet incense which represented the human perfection of Christ. As God said to Moses, referring to the Tabernacle, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount," and required that the whole service of the Tabernacle should be performed with exactness according to the prescribed directions, so in the antitype every feature of the divine plan must be carried out in line with the type so carefully given.

Our Lord's ascension was therefore, according to the type, an essential part of the divine plan. Nor was it arbitrarily indicated in the type: there was a necessity for it, else it would not have been expressed there. In referring to it before his death, Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." – John 14:2,3.

If we inquire whither he went, we have his answer, "I go unto my Father." (John 14:12.) But why was it necessary that he should go away? Had he not finished the work of sacrifice? and could he not now have remained on earth for the personal direction and supervision of the work of the Gospel age? Granted that that work was the selection and the teaching, training and discipline of a people for his name, had he remained as the visible head of the Church would it not have been greatly to her advantage? Then all matters of faith and conduct could have had authoritative settlement; and the dissensions of "Christendom" would have been a thing unknown; and "that Man of Sin, whose coming was after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," could never have arisen: no blasphemous popes or others could then have lorded it over God's heritage. Oh, how blessed would

it have been, seemingly, according to human judgment, had the Lord remained with his people after his resurrection! Why might it not have been so? Why was it necessary that he should go away and leave them apparently at the mercy of every wind of doctrine and of all the machinations of the powers of darkness to overcome them – by arts, temptations, allurements, deceptions and by persecutions in every conceivable form?

Well, however it may appear or may have appeared to human judgment, the Lord himself said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." "But consider, "Lord, the disciples might have urged, "that the Church, as it increases in numbers, and as false teachers will surely arise among us, will greatly need a visible head to direct her course and to save her from endless divisions and discords. How can the Church remain one, as thou hast prayed (John 17:11), in the midst of the conflicting voices and influences that will arise?" But no, the early disciples asked no such questions: they were not so self-confident as the multitudes of professed Christians of later date, who seem to have concluded that, since the Lord had so unwisely ignored the subsequent conditions and necessities of the Church, they would select from their midst one upon whom they would confer the title, "the vicar of Jesus Christ," and consider him and his successors in office the visible heads of the Church, who should be considered by all as infallible authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

Both the Church and the world are aware of the evil results of this heady philosophy, and of the monstrous usurpations of authority and power that have made both the church and the world to groan under the iron heel of oppression. And yet, strange as it may seem, though the folly of this measure has been so glaringly manifest, and the hated power of the false head of the Church has been cast off, again there is a great cry for his restoration to power and authority. The religious leaders of to-day are saying, We need and must have a visible head to reorganize and unify the divided hosts of "Christendom" – Christ's (?) kingdom; – and many are looking anxiously to the Papacy for that head.

Nevertheless, we are of those who still believe that it was expedient for Christ to go away; and that, too, without leaving any visible head to represent him in office. It was expedient for various reasons; and those in view of all the seemingly adverse conditions that could, and that the Lord knew were sure to, arise; for he foretold the very things that were to come to pass – the coming of the Man of Sin, the false teachers, and plausible false doctrines and how they would prosper, and the persecutions of the saints through long and weary centuries, and the treading down of the truth and the prevalence and prosperity of error.

His going away was expedient for the following reasons: –

(1) As already intimated, in order that, in accordance with the pattern given us in the typical high priest, Aaron, in the service of the typical tabernacle, he, as our great High Priest, should enter into heaven, into the presence of God – the antitypical holy of holies – for us. To this the Apostle Paul refers, saying, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands [into the typical tabernacle, as did Aaron the typical high priest], which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." – Heb. 9:24.

If we would know what Christ our High Priest did for us after his ascension to the "most holy," to heaven itself, the presence of God, we have but to look back to the type which was made to illustrate it. There we see the high priest, after he had sacrificed the bullock which represented the humanity of Christ (while he himself then represented the new creature of the divine nature), entering the Most Holy with the blood of the bullock, and there presenting it before the mercy seat in the presence of the Shekinah glory; thus formally presenting to

God the evidence of the typical sacrifice for the sins of the people, and so typically completing the work of atonement toward God. (See Lev. 16:6,14,17; Heb. 9:7.) And the Apostle in Heb. 9:7-14, shows that this work, thus typically accomplished by the typical high priest, was actually accomplished by Christ after his ascension to the Father, and that this formal presentation of the fact of his sacrifice for our redemption, was therefore a necessary part of the work of atonement, without which, according to the type (Lev. 16:2,3), his sacrifice would have availed nothing. It was only after the sacrifice had been made in exact conformity to the prescribed method, and after the evidence thereof (the blood) had been duly presented in the Most Holy, that the blessing of God could be granted to those for whom the atonement was made. Every part of the prescribed work was, in the antitype, as in the type, a necessary part, without which the whole would have been a failure. The typical sacrifices, of course, availed nothing, except to illustrate to our minds the actual processes of the work of atonement and the reasonable necessity of all its various features.

(2) His going away was expedient also for himself, and again for us indirectly. This our Lord illustrated in his parable of the young nobleman going into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. (Luke 19:12.) Paul tells us that our Lord's great exaltation, which included, not only his change to the divine nature, but also his official elevation to the right hand of God, was granted to him as a reward for his atoning sacrifice – "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name." This full exaltation, it is manifest, could not have been experienced until the sacrifice had been, not only made, but presented as well, as the fulfilment of this part of the divine plan. This full exaltation was that "glory" to which the Lord referred when he said, "Ought not Christ [according to the Scriptures] to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) His going away was necessary, therefore, to this exaltation to the right hand of God – an exaltation which also is greatly to our present as well as to our future benefit.

But let us consider further what is said of this glorious exaltation for which purpose it was necessary that our Lord should go away. The Apostle Paul says (Eph. 1:17,20,21), "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, . . . raised Christ from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [age], but also in that which is to come." And in his Revelation to John on Patmos, Jesus said, "I am set down with my Father in his throne." The inference is plain, therefore, that our Lord was exalted as Jehovah's Prime Minister in the throne of universal dominion, for which exalted office he was also duly qualified, being made a partaker of the divine (immortal) nature, a dignity never before conferred upon any created being. Such has been the honor and glory of our blessed Lord ever since he ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us.

But what does it signify to us that our Lord was thus exalted so far beyond even our comprehension of the glory? Oh, it signifies much! it signifies that "when he ascended up on high, he led captivity [death] captive;" for he that ascended thus into the heavens is he, the very same Jesus, "that descended first into the lower parts of the earth [the grave]; [and] he that descended is the same also that ascended up, far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4:8-10.) It signifies that we have now "a great High Priest, that hath passed into the heavens [one who is now on the most intimate terms and in the closest possible favor with the Sovereign of the whole universe], . . . and not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but [one who] was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;". . .

Jesus ascends to the Father

"a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" and "in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." It signifies that, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and therefore, we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16; 2:17,18; 1 John 2:1.) His very presence there in the glory of his enduring priesthood is the only appeal that is necessary on our behalf; for Jehovah himself loveth us – the dear purchase of the precious blood of his Anointed One (John 16:27); in fact, the whole plan of this reconciliation was of God, and is wrought out in Christ. Yes, praise the Lord!

"Before the throne my surety stands;
My name is written on his hands."
– Heb. 7:22; Isa. 49:16.

Yet the ascension of our blessed Lord to the right hand of power signifies more even than this: it signifies his ability now to "give gifts unto men." At the appointed time – the times of restitution of all things – he comes forth from that holy of holies, heaven itself, whither he hath entered for us, and he will lift up his hands and bless the people (Lev. 9:23), and there will be a thousand years of his glorious reign. But this is not all; for as soon as he had ascended up on high and presented his sacrifice on our behalf, he sent the Comforter, the holy spirit of adoption, into the hearts of his disciples (on the day of Pentecost), whereby they were enabled to cry, Abba, Father. It was with reference to this gift that Peter said on that day, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) And this gift has continued with the Church ever since. It was sent according to his promise – "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart I will send him unto you." This gift, the Apostle John shows, could not be given to the disciples until after the Lord's ascension. "For the holy spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." – John 7:39.

With some idea at least of the necessity of the Lord's departure in their interest, and assured of his coming again in glory and power, we can understand the rejoicing of the disciples as they returned to Jerusalem after his ascension. They were comforted and blessed, not only by the hope of his return, but also by the promise of the Comforter, as a token of his love and of the Father's favor, not many days after.

HE ASCENDED UP ON HIGH – R. 2818

ACTS 1:1-11

"While he blessed them he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." – Luke 24:51

LUKE, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, in its introduction refers to his Gospel narrative of the life of Jesus – respecting "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which he was taken up." It was no doubt of divine intention that he should express this matter in this particular form, and refer to the personal work of Jesus as merely the beginning of his work. Only those who grasp this thought; viz., that the body of the Church, "the body of Christ," in the flesh, is a continuation of the work of Jesus, the Head of that body, in the flesh – only such can grasp with clearness the divine plan. We are to consider the name, Jesus, as the personal name of our Lord and Head, and the name Christ, or Anointed, as the official name, applicable to him as the head, and to the whole Church as his body. From this statement the two advents of Christ are brought close together, for the work of the first advent, the sacrifice of Christ in the flesh, will be little more than completed, until the work of the second advent begins, the blessing of all the families of the earth with restitution privileges and mercies, at the hands of the glorified Christ, Head and body. Indeed the ***preparation*** for the new age and its work laps upon this Gospel age and its work.

It was in harmony with this thought (that the work which he had begun his apostles, and all his footstep-followers, were to carry on) that the Master so particularly instructed them during the forty days after his resurrection. We have already noticed that he appeared to them in all some six or eight times, and now in the present lesson we have an account of his seventh (or ninth) appearance, at the end of the forty days. It was probably at least a week after he had seen seven brethren in Galilee that he appeared to them again at Jerusalem, where he evidently had appointed the apostles to assemble. Here he met with them and gave them his final parting instructions, which were perfectly in harmony with his previous teachings, that their mission was to continue to be a spiritual one, to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs – to continue the work which he had begun, and to follow in his footsteps. But he impresses upon their minds the fact that they are incompetent for this work until first they shall have received of the Father through him a special power from on high, for which he bade them wait at Jerusalem. He reminded them that this blessing for which they were to wait was the same that he already had mentioned before his crucifixion, – telling them that the Father would send the holy spirit in his name, that it would bring to their remembrance all things that he had spoken unto them, and guide them into all truth, etc. – John 14:16,26; 15:26.

He would impress his disciples with the importance of the blessing for which they were to wait, and with the fact that it meant to them a new era, a new dispensation: as they knew of the reformation movement instituted by John the Baptizer, and that the repentant sinners were immersed in water, he would have them know that now he was instituting a Church on a much higher plane, and that all who would be received into it would be immersed in holy spirit,* holy power – come under an influence of power from on high. His declaration that this would be not many days hence, was indefinite purposely; first, that they should expect it soon, and not be disheartened or discouraged, and yet he left the exact number of days unstated, so that they might be continually watching for it. This left the apostles in a waiting attitude, and, as Luke informs us, in an attitude of prayer and expectancy, very profitable to them at this juncture.

Slowly, during the forty days, the disciples were learning to expect very different things

*"Ghost" is old English for "spirit" – the word is really obsolete, and had the American Revision Committee had its way it would never have appeared in the Revised Version, we are told. It is not used in the American Committee's Version; it is misleading.

from what they had in mind at the beginning and throughout the Lord's ministry: they were learning that the Kingdom glories and honors were not to be distributed immediately; but that a new dispensation, and a new kind of work in harmony with it, was set before them to be done; and gradually their minds reverted to the prophecies in which the blessings of the Lord upon the nation of Israel are set forth, and the intimation given that the blessings upon the whole world are to flow through the children of Abraham in some national capacity. They had confidence in these prophecies, and now they would ask the Lord respecting them. How could these prophecies be fulfilled under the new arrangement, which seemed to ignore the nation and to merely use themselves, the Lord's followers, a mere fragment of the nation. Hence their inquiry of the Master whether now or soon or when the prophecies would be fulfilled, which promised the restoration of Israel to divine favor as God's Kingdom, thus implying its release from the power of Rome and all other dominions.

Our Lord's answer was not to the effect that they had misunderstood these prophecies, and that they would all have some kind of spiritual fulfilment; on the contrary, by his answer he implied that their conception of the prophecies was quite proper, but that the time for their fulfilment had not yet come, and that they must not press the question as to the times and seasons; they must trust to God, who has these in his own keeping, and who will abundantly fulfil every promise he had ever made in its due time.

Our Lord, then, drew the minds of his disciples back to their own work, to which he had called them – to the work which they were to accomplish as members of his body in the flesh. He informs them that they shall be specially empowered through the holy spirit, which the Father would send in his name; and that using this power, this influence, they would be privileged to be his witnesses – his representatives – representatives of his character, his teachings and his work, not only in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Samaria, but also eventually to the utmost parts of the earth. He would have them see that a great work was being committed to their care. God would attend to all of his promises in due time; now they, to be his co-laborers and witnesses, must be attentive to the work to which they had consecrated themselves, and for which they now were to be thoroughly empowered and quickened through the holy spirit. With this parting lesson, while he was walking with them and talking to them on the Mount of Olives, going in the direction of Bethany, he began gradually to ascend from them, a cloud receiving him out of their sight.

One error leads to another; and the failure to note that our Lord's change of nature from human to spiritual took place in his resurrection, and that his presence during the forty days was that of a spirit being, unseen except when he for a few times very briefly appeared to his disciples for the purpose of instructing them, and these different appearances in different forms, in different kind of clothing, etc. – has led some to very peculiar ideas respecting our Lord's ascension. Thus we find one Doctor of Divinity saying on the subject: "The ascension was a noble and fitting close of the earthly career of Jesus; far better than to die again, as Lazarus died, or to remain always on earth in his body – the only alternatives!" Poor man! How tightly error has blindfolded the eyes of his understanding, that he should think thus.

From the Scriptural standpoint, that our Lord was raised "a quickening ***spirit***," invisible to mankind, and that he merely "***appeared***" in forms of flesh, the matter has an entirely different aspect. From this standpoint we see that this last appearance of our Lord to the disciples, like the other appearances, was intended for their instruction, and to help natural men, not yet begotten of the holy spirit, to understand deep things, which otherwise they could not so well have comprehended. Our Lord's ascension was simply another way of ***disappearin***g. When he appeared to them in the upper room, the door being shut, and talked to them and convinced them, having

finished his lesson he "***vanished***" as suddenly as he had "***appeared***." The body of flesh and its clothing, which, by miraculous power, he had organized within the room, he could and did disorganize again by a power beyond our comprehension – the same power which turned the water at Cana into wine; by the same power by which angels had frequently appeared as men for a purpose, – disappearing when the purpose had been accomplished. Indeed, in one of these instances narrated in the Scriptures, an angel accomplished his disappearance in very much the same manner in which our Lord disappeared on this last occasion of his ascension. – Judges 13:19-21.

The propriety of ***thus*** terminating his intercourse with the disciples is evident: they would have no further expectation of his appearing to them again as a man, in different forms, after such a farewell: they would understand that he was gone from them now as a spirit being, as he had previously said: "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come." The confusion of the D.D. from whom we quote foregoing, is the more manifest from the fact that in further writing upon this subject he recognized the "two men" of vs. 10 as being angels who, for the time being, had assumed human form for the purpose of communicating with the disciples, and impressing upon them a certain valuable lesson. Why could not the gentleman see that our Lord, having finished the work which the Father had given him to do (***viz***., the laying down of his life as the man Christ Jesus) was no longer a little lower than the angels, a fleshly being, but was now "changed," and as he was, previous to coming into the world, a spirit being of the highest order, so now, as the Apostle declares in his resurrection, he was a life-giving spirit? (1 Cor. 15:45.) And if the angels had power to appear as men, and did so appear, why should not their chief and Lord have power so to appear to his disciples in various forms, for the purpose of convincing them that he was no longer dead, but risen, – no longer a man, but "changed"?

Our Lord's words, "It is expedient for you that I go away," lead us to inquire, Why was his ascension expedient? Let us consider the matter. Had he remained with the disciples, present but invisible, and appearing to them and to all of his followers occasionally throughout this Gospel age, of what special advantage would it have been? What could he do for us in this manner that could not as well be done for us from his high station in the heavens with the Father? And again, had he remained with the Church it would have seemed all the more inexplicable that he should have permitted his representatives to be misused, slandered, abused in various ways, and that he should seem to take no part in the management of the affairs of the world, while claiming the legal right through purchase, by his own blood, to be its prince and Savior from the power of sin and Satan. For all these reasons it was appropriate that he should not be with us, but that we should know that he was with the Father, and should wait for him until the time appointed of the Father – until all of his faithful disciples had been called and proven acceptable, and the foreordained number of the elect fulfilled; – and that he should then come to receive them to himself, and to establish them as his joint-heirs in the Kingdom; and to assume the rulership of the world, to bind the Adversary, to overthrow his dominion, and to establish truth and righteousness on a permanent basis by the divine authority and power which he possesses.

But there was another and all-important reason why he should ascend to the Father, and it is that which our Lord mentions, "Except I go away the Comforter will not come." (John 16:7.) Why not? We answer, that the whole world being under divine condemnation, none could be recognized by the Father and adopted into his family, begotten of the holy spirit as his sons, so long as they were sinners. And the death of our Lord Jesus, while it was the ***ransom***-price, had not as yet affected any of those for whom it was intended. Before it could benefit them he must ascend to the Father and must

present that sacrifice or ***price*** as on behalf of those to whom it would be applicable: that they, being justified by faith and sanctification or setting apart to holiness and divine service, even unto death, might receive the spirit of adoption into the family of God's spiritual sons.

This was the reason, and it is in full harmony with the Apostle John's statement: "The holy spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:30.) He had received his glorious body in the resurrection, as the Apostle shows us in 1 Cor. 15:43,44; but it remained for him to be glorified (honored) after he would appear in the presence of the Father and present before him his complete work, and officially receive divine approval; then he was honored, glorified, with a name that is above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father." – Phil. 2:10. We can imagine the eleven apostles (all Galileans) standing looking after the disappearing Master, and endeavoring to peer into the cloud that had received him from their sight, and endeavoring to comprehend the meaning of the various lessons of experience through which they had recently passed; and their perplexed thoughts respecting the promised coming of Christ again, and the interim of loneliness which he had promised should be compensated for by the promised holy spirit which should comfort them. Then appropriately, at the needed moment, under the divine providence, two beings stood by them, "men" in appearance, but in garments which indicated that they had only assumed the form of men for the occasion, and which told the apostles that these were really angels. These in cheerful tone and impressive manner assured them that they need not continue to look into the sky, but to remember that he would so come again in like manner as they had seen him go.

How strange that so many of the Lord's people, even amongst those who fully believe in, and with deep interest long for his second coming, should overlook the particular features of this angelic testimony! First, that it was the ***same*** Jesus that should come again – not the former Jesus, whom they knew in the flesh, but the same Jesus, who was taken up from them, and whom they recognized as so thoroughly "changed" from the time of his resurrection – the spirit Jesus, "a quickening spirit." This is the one promised to come again, not in weakness, as "in the days of his ***flesh***," but a spirit being, clothed with full plenitude of divine power to establish them as his Kingdom, and through them to bless all the families of the earth.

How strange, too, that the other important fact which the angel noted, ***viz***., the "***manner***," is so often overlooked by the same class! What was the manner of our Lord's going? Was it with great ostentation, with the sound of a literal trumpet calling the attention of the whole world? Was it in a manner known to the whole world? Or was the ***manner*** of his going an extremely quiet one, known only to his most faithful followers? His second coming is to be "***in like manner***!" Those who give to the words of the angels their true weight and force, laying the emphasis upon the right words, will receive a blessing in so doing, and be the better prepared to understand the character of our Lord's ***parousia***. They will be less surprised to know that it fulfills all these conditions; that he is now seen only with the eye of faith, and only by the most consecrated of his people. It will be after his second coming, that he (unknown to the world) will reckon with his own servants his saints, exalting the worthy, faithful over a few things, to be rulers over many things. (Matt. 25:14-30.) It will be still later on that he will restore the Kingdom again to Israel – to the worthy ones of that people, through whom, as the earthly agents of the spiritual Kingdom, the blessing of divine grace and truth shall flow to all the families of the earth. And in connection with the giving of the Kingdom to the elect the great time of trouble will reveal the new ruler to all the families of the earth in the fiery judgments upon all iniquity, until every eye (of understanding) shall see him – revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION – R. 2081

ACTS 1:1-14

"While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." – Luke 24:51

THE writer, Luke the evangelist, here introduces the Book of Acts and associates it with the Gospel of Luke.

(2,3) These two verses cover briefly the forty days of our Lord's presence with the disciples after his resurrection, prior to his ascension. An important part of our Lord's mission during those forty days was to give the disciples instruction respecting the spiritual character of the kingdom to be established, and the necessity for his sufferings as a prelude to the glory to follow. His words of explanation, as for instance to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, constituted only a part of this instruction; another and, we may judge, a still more important instruction was conveyed to them through observation of his conduct. He would prove to them two things: **(1)** that he whom they had seen crucified and buried had come to life, had arisen from the dead; **(2)** that, although alive and the same person, with the same individuality, yet now his ***conditions*** were entirely altered; – that he was no longer "the ***man*** Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom," but that, having finished that work for the performance of which he took the form and nature of a servant, he was made alive again on the higher, the spiritual plane, which he left more than thirty-three years previously in order to redeem mankind.

Since the apostles were still natural men, not having as yet received the gift of the holy spirit, they were still unable to appreciate spiritual things (John 3:12); and hence it was necessary to give the proofs of a spiritual matter (namely, that Christ had risen from the dead a spirit being) along lines which the unilluminated could appreciate. It would not have availed the accomplishment of his purpose, it would not have given the disciples satisfactory evidence of his resurrection, had he appeared to them as he did subsequently to Saul of Tarsus in the glory of a spirit being "above the brightness of the sun at noonday." That was a valuable lesson to the Apostle Paul and to all the apostles; but it needed the connecting links associating the risen and glorified Jesus with the ***man*** Jesus, and these links of association were provided during the forty days before the ascension. It was to this end that our Lord appeared to the disciples in bodies of flesh, and on two occasions in bodies resembling the one which they had seen crucified, bearing also the nail and spear marks. He thus associated in their minds the crucified man-Jesus and the risen spirit-Jesus.

The second step in the lesson was in the fact that these appearances were infrequent: in all the forty days the records would not indicate that he appeared to them at the very outside more than ten times, and his interviews with them would appear to have been very brief, so that we are certainly safe in concluding that out of the forty days he was not visibly manifest to the disciples more than four hours – quite probably not more than one-half hour at each of the five to ten interviews recorded. Where was he the remainder of the time? would naturally come to them as a question. Why not with them continually as before his crucifixion? they probably asked. And this was part of the lesson – to induce reasoning and reflection on their part, and to cause them to understand that a great "change" had taken place in the interim between his crucifixion and his first appearance to them on the morning of his resurrection. We can fancy their study of the subject during those forty days, and discussions pro and con, their wonders when the next appearance would take place, and what would be the outcome of the whole matter.

The third feature of their lesson in observation was in respect to the manner and variety of his

appearances; once as the gardener to Mary, who saw no nail prints in his hands or feet, although she embraced his feet; again as a sojourner and guest at Emmaus in another form, so that the disciples did not know him and did not remark anything peculiar about his hands or his feet, although he was with them at the table. It was in his asking of a blessing upon the food that they recognized him. Again at the seashore where he evidently appeared in still another form to Peter, James and John who recognized him by the miracle, and concerning whom the evangelist says, None of them durst ask him who he was, knowing that it was the Lord – not by the marks of the crown of thorns, not by the nail prints, but by his manner and the miraculous draught of great fishes following their unprofitable night of toil. And on two occasions he appeared in a body of flesh like to that crucified, with nail prints and spear marks; once when doubting Thomas was absent, and once when he was present. These various appearances under various conditions in various places, wholly unlike his previous conduct with them, were calculated to teach them the lesson that he was "changed" – that he was no longer a flesh being, "the man Christ Jesus," "made flesh" and limited to fleshly conditions in locomotion and visibility, etc.; but that now he was alive, though so changed that he could appear or disappear, assume one kind of body or another kind, assume one kind of clothing or another kind at pleasure.

The fourth lesson along the lines of observation was taught by the fact that he appeared and disappeared miraculously, suddenly, unaccountably. Coming from they knew not whither, the Lord had joined the two going to Emmaus; and then, after he had given them as much of a lesson as they could digest, he "vanished out of their sight." The same evening in another city he suddenly appeared to the ten, the doors being shut for fear of the Jews, and, we may suppose, securely barred: he needed not to undo the bolts nor to open the door as the "man Christ Jesus" would have needed to do; the spirit-born Jesus could do and did do just what he had previously explained to Nicodemus in the hearing of the disciples as recorded by the Apostle John (3:5). He came and went like the wind; they could not tell whence he came; and when he went he vanished out of their sight again, and they could not tell whither he went: ***So*** is every one that is ***born of the spirit***. No wonder the disciples were astonished and affrighted at the first, and needed that our Lord should convince them that they were not looking at a spirit but at plain, ordinary flesh and bones, of which they need have no fear. Of this he assured them saying, you do not see a spirit, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Similarly he appeared in a body of flesh and bones to Father Abraham and ate and drank with him (Gen. 18:1,2); and similarly angels in the past upon certain missions have appeared to men. We are to draw a great distinction between the power of a spirit being to appear in a body of flesh and the great humiliation which our Lord accomplished on our behalf, when he entirely left his glory and exchanged his nature as a spirit being for human nature and was "made flesh." In the one case the spirit nature was maintained with unrestricted power and merely used a human form as a means of communication, creating the human body as well as the human clothing in an instant, and as quickly dissolving both. This was evidently what our Lord did, when he appeared in the room, the doors being shut, and when he vanished, the doors still being shut. The power thus manifested is so far beyond human power as to be incomprehensible to us, as the turning of water into wine or as the resurrection itself. It can only be received by faith based upon the evidences of reliable witnesses and supported on every hand by our knowledge of the divine power.

That the apostles got this thought is evident from the peculiar manner in which they refer to the Lord's manifestations after his resurrection. They say, "he appeared," "he showed himself." These are not ordinary expressions nor do they mark ordinary

circumstances. Ordinarily, people are seen if present without any necessity of ***showing*** themselves or ***appearing***. The disciples learned and noted also the fact that these showings and appearings were only to the believers and never to the world; which agrees with our Lord's testimony before his death, – "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more." Nor will the world ever see the man Christ Jesus. While he still bears the title of Son of Man as a mark of his great obedience to the Father, and the purchase of the human race, and his title to the glories of the divine nature which he now possesses as a reward of his obedience even unto death, even the death of the cross, God has now highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess.

Many confuse themselves greatly by failing to clearly distinguish between spirit-beings and human-beings and their distinct powers. Very many suppose that a spirit body must be ***made out of*** a human body, and must still contain certain human elements. They overlook the fact that the resurrection body is not the body buried, as the Apostle so forcibly proves (1 Cor. 15:37,38); nor will those have "flesh and blood" bodies who shall inherit the Kingdom. (1 Cor. 15:50; John 3:3,5,8.) Some, in an effort to harmonize a false theory with the Scriptures, claim that a spirit-body is one in which the blood gives place to spirit. (Do they mean wind?) They fail to see that this would not harmonize with the conditions noted foregoing. A body of flesh and bones with wind in the veins instead of blood could no more come into a room when the doors were shut than could a body of flesh and bones and blood: nor could it vanish from sight – nor could its clothing come in and then vanish out of a closed room. The only solution is that which recognizes the truth of our Lord's words, – "A spirit hath not flesh and bones;" although spirit beings in harmony with God have in the past been permitted to assume flesh and bones and clothing for approved purposes.

(4,5) Here our attention is called again to the fact that the gift of the holy spirit to the gospel Church is something unique – wholly different from any previous gift of the holy spirit except upon our Lord Jesus himself. They were to wait for it, and did wait ten days from the time of our Lord's ascension, until the spirit power came upon them. They waited while he as the great High Priest went into heaven itself and there appeared in the presence of God and presented to God on our behalf the merits of his sacrifice at Calvary.

(6-8) They were perplexed with the new order of things since Christ's resurrection. Their previous ideas, common to the Jews, had been of an earthly kingdom, and Christ and themselves, the apostles, associated in a human or fleshly glory and kingdom power. Now however they perceived their Master wonderfully changed, and he spoke to them again of going away and said nothing about the kingdom for which they in common with all recognized as the twelve tribes of Israel waited. (Acts 26:7.) So they asked him concerning the time for its establishment. In his answer he does not deny that there will be a kingdom, but the reverse, merely telling them that it is not for them to know the time. When they asked him a similar question before his crucifixion he answered that he did not know. (Mark 13:32.) But he does not so answer on this occasion. We must suppose, on the contrary, that he did know, because he was now born of the spirit, and he himself testified "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me." This must therefore have included the power of knowledge; but he withheld the knowledge from the disciples in their interest and instead told them of the coming power of the spirit, and of the intermediate mission appointed for them and all his Church, of witnessing to the world before the establishment of his Kingdom.

(9-11) The account of the ascension is very simply given and yet, strange to say, many stumble over the statement of the angels "this same Jesus" "shall so come in like manner as

ye have seen him go." Many think of this as though it read ***that*** same Jesus, "the ***man*** Christ Jesus," shall come again. But it was ***this*** Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, the Jesus whom none of the world saw; the Jesus who was seen by the disciples only a few times during that forty days; the Jesus who was seen by them only when "he appeared" or "showed himself;" the Jesus who could come into their midst, the doors being shut, and who could and did "vanish out of their sight;" "***this*** same Jesus" is the one who will "come again."

Again, many get a wrong impression from the word "manner." They think of manner as meaning ***flesh***; but manner means ***manner***. He ascended in a quiet manner, without display or commotion or noise, in a secret manner, so far as the world was concerned, in a manner known only to the disciples. Hence, when he comes again in like ***manner***, it will be likewise unknown and invisibly to the world, without noise or demonstration, and recognized only by believers.

FULL PROOF OF HIS MINISTRY – R. 549

Two Excerpts from this article

Excerpt 1:

After our Lord's resurrection and ascension, the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples, according to the Master's command, were together awaiting the descent of power from on high – the Holy Spirit. While waiting they very properly spent the time in prayer and in searching of the Scriptures, and while thus engaged (Acts 1:13-26) Peter found that passage in David's prophecy which mentions the appointment of another to the office of Judas the betrayer of our Lord; and calling the attention of the company to it he said: "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled. . . which David spoke concerning Judas who was guide to them that took Jesus, for he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. . . . It is written in the book of Psalms, "Let his habitation be desolate and let no man dwell therein, and his bishopric let another take."

Commenting on this, Peter urged that it was their duty to select one of their number to be a successor to Judas, saying, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. Peter's counsel seemed good to all the disciples, and accordingly they appointed two whom they esteemed the most proper persons, and asked the Lord to make a choice between them, agreeing to cast lots, and to accept the one on whom the lot should fall as the Lord's choice of an apostle to fill the place of Judas.

Now, though Peter and the rest of the disciples were very zealous and anxious to do the Lord's will, they evidently made a great mistake. In the first place, all that they were told to do was to ***tarry***, to ***wait*** at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. In the second place, their human judgment was unwittingly attempting to direct the Lord, even before they were baptized with the Spirit; and not only so, but to limit his choice to one of two disciples. It was just like impetuous though zealous Peter to make such a proposition, and the erring human judgment of the balance of the disciples to approve and accept it. But the Lord, knowing their hearts, simply ignored their error, and let time prove to them that he was abundantly able, without their assistance, to make his own choice and

to direct his own work.

Of Matthias, on whom the lot fell to be an Apostle, we never hear afterward. He was with them at Pentecost, and was one of the hundred and twenty who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but his record ends there. The special mission of the Apostles is clearly defined in Acts 1:8 – our Lord's last words before his ascension: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ***ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth***."

While this, in a general sense, applied to the whole company of those early disciples, and while in fact by their faith and example, as a company who had actually seen the Lord both before and after his resurrection, they have been witnesses to all the world; yet in the strictest sense, it applied to those specially chosen as public teachers and witnesses; and those same twelve Apostles still speak through their writings, and shall continue to do so until the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

Since to be an Apostle was to be a ***witness*** of the Lord's resurrection, ***none could be*** Apostles except those who had seen Jesus after his resurrection, hence the eleven felt confident that the one for Judas' place should be chosen from the company present, but Jehovah had another plan and was preparing an instrument of his own choosing in the person of Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus? The disciples would never have thought of him. He was the most noted and dreaded persecutor of the church known to them, not only in Jerusalem, but pursuing them even unto strange cities; neither had he seen the Lord after his resurrection. Nevertheless Saul of Tarsus was a chosen vessel of the Lord, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel; (Acts 9:15) and his after course gave ***full proof*** of his Apostleship. Though Saul was not among those who saw our Lord as he appeared – in the flesh – after his resurrection, this was no barrier to God's plan under which he was "chosen from his mother's womb" to be an Apostle. Hence we read, "Last of all he was seen of (by) me also." (1 Cor. 15:8.) While the other Apostles saw Jesus as ***he appeared*** after his resurrection, in various human bodies, Saul saw him ***as he is*** – a glorious spiritual body shining above the brightness of the noon-day sun. The effect of the personal glory of the Lord as seen by Paul, was to strike him blind, and only by a miracle was his sight restored.

As Paul saw Jesus – a glorious spiritual being – so all the little flock shall see him when born of the Spirit – in the resurrection. As at their conversion and consecration, they are begotten of the Spirit, in the resurrection they are born of the Spirit. When we see him "as he is," it will not have the effect on us that it had on Paul, for he saw him "as one born out of due time" (more properly ***before*** the time); but we (and Paul also at that time) shall see him ***as he*** IS, for we shall be changed and be spiritual and glorious beings like him, being fashioned like unto his glorious body.

In view of the benefit to be derived from such an example as Paul, it would be well to note in what a marked way the Lord gave proof of his calling. Some at the present day, in looking back to the early church, appear to think that they, unlike the church of today, moved along very smoothly, and that because they had actually seen the Lord and heard from his own lips, there was little or no trial of faith, and no differences of opinion among them; that having the Apostles directly appointed of the Lord and present with them, their teachings were all received without doubt or questioning; and, in short, that all was harmony, save the trials that came from the outside world, from those who did not profess to love or follow the Lord Jesus.

But this we find is far from the facts in the case. Immediately after the baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost, all were of one mind and full of hope

and joy – "And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7.) And many gladly received the word and were baptized – as many as three thousand in one day. These were genuine conversions too, and not the result of excitement and impulse, for they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and gave evidence of a spirit of sacrifice. Such were added to the Church daily. (Acts 2:41-47.)

While rejoicing in the truth, the fierce persecutions from without, only served to more firmly unite them in love and sympathy, and in defense of the truth against a common foe. But soon difficulties arose among themselves. Some began to "depart from the faith once delivered to the saints," to be "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," and their evil influence was great.

It was in the very beginning of the outcroppings of error, that Paul's clear teachings and manifest leadings of the Spirit marked him as the very ***chief*** of the Apostles, a teacher of teachers, the special mouth-piece of the Lord. . . .

Excerpt 2:

And let me say further, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. [Gal. 1:11,12.] I Paul ***am an Apostle***, not of men, neither by man's appointment, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead. [Gal. 1:1] You heard of me in times past how I persecuted the Church of God and how I wasted it and how zealous I was for the tradition of my fathers. [Gal. 1:13,14.] [And he verily thought he did God's service. Acts 26:9.] But when it pleased God who from my birth called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but went forth at once to preach the faith which once I persecuted. [Gal. 1:15,16,23].

To prove to you that I received my commission and authority direct from the Lord and not from them which were Apostles before me, let me tell you that I did not go up to Jerusalem until three years after my conversion; and then I went to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the Apostles saw I none save James, the Lord's brother. [Gal. 1:17-19.] Then ***fourteen years after***, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up ***by revelation*** – the Lord sent me – not to learn of them, but to communicate unto them ***that*** Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. (Gal. 2:1-2.) The other Apostles, fettered in a measure by the Judaizing influences around them, and not making sufficient progress in the knowledge of the truth, Paul was sent by the Lord to strengthen and assist them. But to show that he did not go about it boastfully he says, I communicated "***privately*** to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run in vain (v. 2), lest I should fail to have them see the depth and fullness of the Gospel ***revealed*** to me."

When Paul went to Jerusalem he was cordially received of the Apostles and elders and the church at Jerusalem. Though they had one of their own choosing to fill the place of Judas, and though they did not seem to understand his selection and peculiar course in preaching to the Gentiles, yet recognizing in him the spirit of the Master, and hearing how he had been owned and blessed, and of his devotion, zeal, and self-sacrifice, they had enough of the spirit of Christ in them to accept and receive him gladly, and they soon began to realize that ***he*** was the Lord's choice. They saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto Paul, as the Gospel of the circumcision was committed unto Peter, (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in Paul toward the Gentiles) and when James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto Paul, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. [Gal. 2:7-9.]

APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION UNSCRIPTURAL – R. 5002

Mark 3:7-19; Matthew 5:13-16

"Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit." – John 15:16 (R.V.)

TODAY'S LESSON shows the particularity with which the twelve Apostles were chosen. Many were the Redeemer's followers at times, both men and women, but only The Twelve were specially deputized as His mouthpieces and representatives among men. Some of the things said to and respecting them are equally appropriate to every one of Jesus' followers, but other things said to The Twelve and respecting them apply to none others of their day or since – for instance, the Savior said to The Twelve, and to none others, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." – Matt. 16:19; 18:18.

The import of these words clearly is that the persons indicated were assured that they would be so specially guided of Divine providence in all their efforts that they would set forth as the Divine will amongst men nothing to which Heaven would not assent. And, on the other hand, they would declare not binding upon the followers of Jesus only such things as in God's sight would not be binding. In those twelve men, therefore, we recognize a plenary inspiration, or special guidance not accorded in this particular degree to others of the "brethren."

We do not forget that Judas was one of the original Twelve and that, proving traitorous, "He went to his own place." We remember also that he was specifically referred to by the Prophet David, through whom the Divine message came, that another would take the Apostleship which Judas forfeited. What we do claim is this: that the announcement was prophetically made of a successor to Judas, so as to teach us that the appointment of his successor was exceptional and not the rule; that aside from this one case there would be no successors.

Surely there is no intimation in the New Testament that as one after another of the Apostles died other men were recognized as succeeding them. On the contrary, the Scriptures repeatedly refer to the "Twelve Apostles of the Lamb." Moreover, as the Jewish Dispensation began at the death of Jacob, in the recognition of his twelve sons, so the Christian Dispensation began at the death of Jesus, in the recognition of His twelve Apostles. And as one of the tribes of Israel was cut off, and is not mentioned in the enumeration in the Apocalypse, but the tribe of Manasseh substituted, so amongst Jesus' Apostles Judas is dropped and a successor is appointed.

ST. PAUL TO SUCCEED JUDAS

In the past we may have read too carelessly the account of how the eleven faithful Apostles exceeded their authority in the selection of Matthias to take the place of Judas. It was proper enough that they should scan the prophecies, and that they should note, as they did, God's declaration of the unfaithfulness of Judas, and that another was to take his special place in the Church; but they should have remembered that they had not as yet qualified as Apostles themselves. They should have remembered that whatever Apostolic or special power they exercised during Jesus' ministry came to them from Him and not from the Heavenly Father – that Jesus endued them as His representatives. They should have remembered that the Master specifically told them to do nothing until after receiving the Heavenly benediction, saying, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

Accrediting them with the very best of heart intentions, it was, nevertheless, effrontery on

their part to select two names and to determine that one or the other must be the successor of Judas. They had no authority for so doing. As for the one upon whom the lot fell, Matthias, we hear nothing further of him. On the contrary, in God's due time, He Himself brought forth Saul of Tarsus, an Israelite indeed, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, who, however perverse in his conduct, was thoroughly conscientious, and verily thought he did God service.

St. Paul himself tells us that he was not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, and that in respect to visions and revelations he had more than they all. He goes back to the time when Christ appeared to him on the way to Damascus and when He declared to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name unto the Gentiles and to kings, and to the people of Israel." St. Paul tells us that he found evidences that God had chosen him for a special service, from his mother's womb. And such special preparation and supervision we doubt not was applicable to all of The Twelve, even as also with John the Baptist in his work. – Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15.

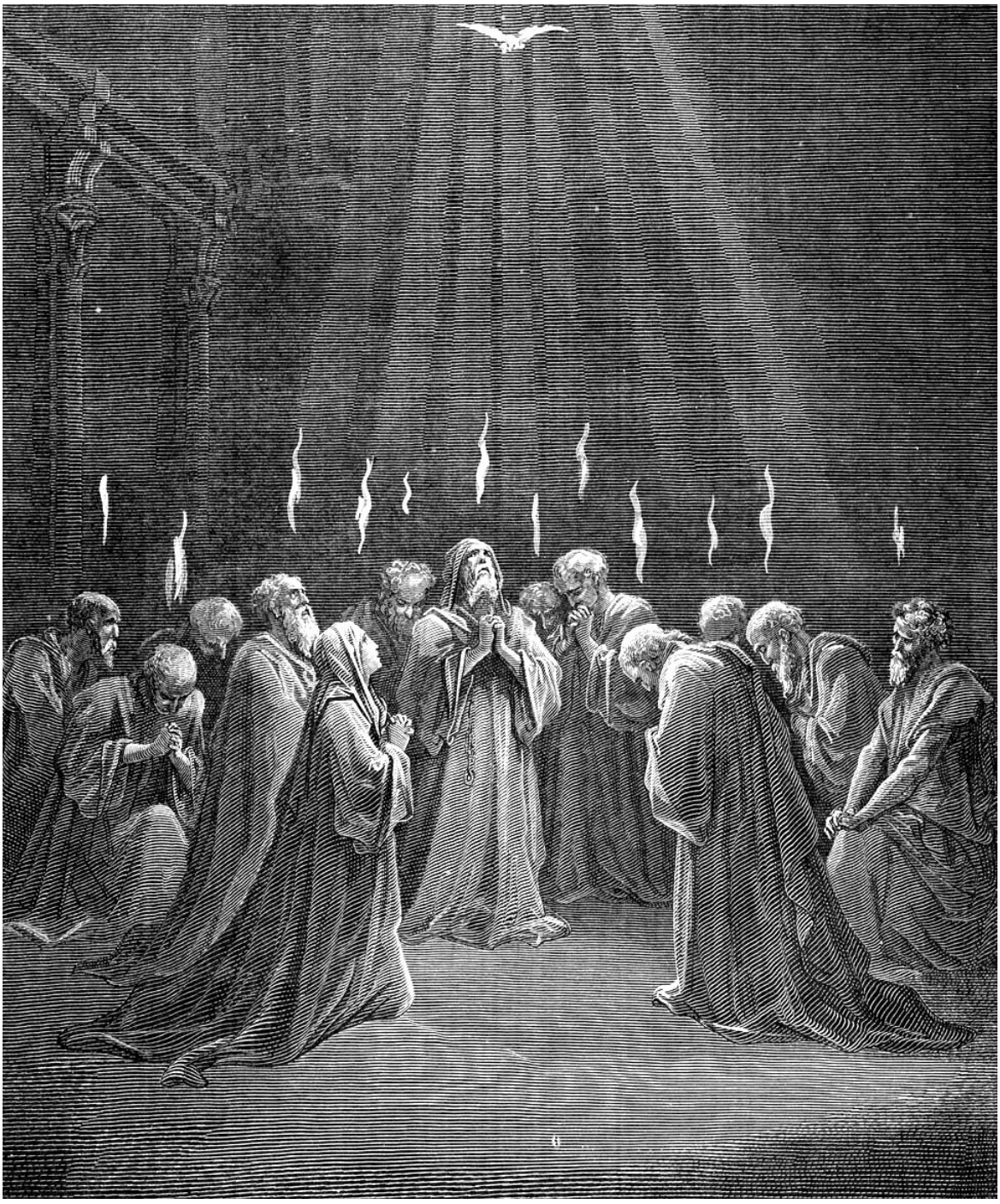
"A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS"

The Lord's specialization of the twelve Apostles is variously referred to. He said: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" and again, "Ye shall sit on twelve thrones." In the symbolical book of Revelation He pictures the Church as a ***woman***, clothed with sunlight, standing over or near to the moon, which symbolizes the Jewish Law Covenant; and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars, representing the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

Again, later on in the same book, we find pictured the Church in glory beyond the veil, the Bride – the New Jerusalem. Of this City we read that it had twelve foundations, all precious stones; and in the twelve foundations were the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. We believe that we need no better evidence on the subject.

The recognition of successors to the Apostles was one of the first errors after their death. Every bishop was recognized as one of the successors and hence as possessing Apostolic authority. It was not long until the words of the original Twelve were neglected. The living bishops were acknowledged as speaking with the same Divine authority – up-to-date. Later great Church Councils were called, in which these bishops, as claimed successors to the Apostles, decided what should and what should not be allowed by the Church, what was and what was not orthodox.

It can be readily seen that this exaltation of false apostles (Rev. 2:2), contrary to the Divine arrangement, opened a flood-gate of error, however well intentioned all concerned may have been. It is surprising that so many still hold to the creeds thus formulated by pseudo-apostles. The need of the hour is a recognition of these facts and an abandonment of all those creeds and a return to the words of Jesus and the Apostles and the Prophets. Only thus can we hope to regain the position lost. Only thus can we extricate ourselves from the multiplied errors represented in the six hundred divisions of the church of Christ, and of their six hundred variations of the original Gospel Message. Only thus can we return to the "one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism," one Father, one Savior, and one "Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven."
– Eph. 4:4-6; Heb. 12:23.



The Descent of the Spirit by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4

THE PENTECOSTAL BLESSING – R. 4306

ACTS 2:1-11

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth." – John 14:17

OUR Lord's message to his disciples when leaving them was, that they should return from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem and tarry there until endued with power from on high. To many the ten days of tarrying would be considered a serious waste of valuable time. Think of it! One hundred and twenty of the Lord's consecrated people idle for ten days – not preaching, nor healing, nor engaging in any special religious work – neglecting business and money-making, and all earthly interests as well. What were they doing? The record implies that their special employment during those ten days was prayer and supplication to God. What did they want? They already were in relationship to God through faith, and permitted to pray to him as their Father. They already knew of Jesus and had already been blessed by him in various ways, some of them having been his mouthpieces. Why tarry? Why pray? Why not go out at once into the Vineyard and labor? If they had been left to guide their own steps, doubtless they would have been at work, but they were following their Master's Word, remembering the testimony, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." They knew not what qualifications they needed for their future service. They were merely trusting all to their Lord and obediently waiting for the promised blessing and preparation.

The necessity for their tarrying was threefold:

(1) They were incompetent for the work designed for them, until empowered for it.

(2) They could not receive the blessed anointing until first the Redeemer has ascended into heaven, "There to appear in the presence of God on our behalf," on behalf of believers. Members of the fallen race, they had already been privileged, like their father Abraham, to return to favor with God as his friends, being "Justified by faith." They could, as justified ones, address him in prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven." They were not enemies at heart, but loyal, even though, to use the Apostle's language, they had been "enemies through wicked works," through inability to keep perfectly the divine law. They were not rebels needing a Mediator, but loyal, though imperfect, friends who needed a Redeemer and Advocate. Their Redeemer testified, "The Father himself loveth you." And again, in prayer to the Father respecting them, he said, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Still, before divine justice could accept them as living sacrifices upon the Lord's altar, it was necessary that their ransom price should be definitely set over to justice by the Redeemer. This was done during the ten days of their "waiting for power from on high." The outpouring of the holy Spirit evidenced the presentation and divine acceptance of the merit of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf. This permitted their recognition as New Creatures, their begettal to the new spirit nature as sons of God, their anointing of the spirit as members of the Royal Priesthood.

(3) These ten days of prayer were necessary also to fit and prepare the Lord's disciples for the reception of the holy Spirit. The human mind resembles a room, the door of which must be opened before treasures can be put therein. The door in this picture would symbolize the will, which must first give consent to whatever enters the mind, the heart, the life. Furthermore a room that is already stocked and overcrowded has little space wherein to place new valuables – the old must be removed that place may be found for the new. Our hearts need to be emptied of their earthly hopes, aims and ambitions in order to make place for the new riches of God's grace. The ten days were probably none too long for the testing of the faith and loving

obedience and zeal for the Lord and his cause, which they had undertaken to serve. As they prayed and fasted and waited expectantly for the promised blessing from on high, doubtless worldly ambitions, hopes and aims dissolved and vanished from their hearts, leaving them ready for the blessing the Lord intended, and which he poured out.

SOUND OF A MIGHTY WIND

We are not to understand that a mighty wind blew upon the praying and waiting company on Pentecost Day, but there was merely a sound which resembled that of a mighty wind. It was the more miraculous that there was no wind. From the reading of the Greek it is inferable that the tongues of fire or blaze of light which appeared over the head of each were not split or cloven flames, but that the expression, "Cloven tongues of fire," implies that a larger flame was first manifest, which was cloven or split or divided into these smaller flames, which appeared over the head of each. But no matter what the particular form of manifestation, its object was quickly discerned. It was the promised blessing from on high, from the Father's throne, through the Son; as St. Peter explained, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another." (1 Pet. 4:10.) We are not to understand that the multitude, being of one mind, produced this manifestation, but rather that the Lord, by his providence, brought them into the condition of full accord, preparatory to the giving of this blessing. Similarly he says that special blessings may be expected when two or three unite in their petition – not that their uniting effects anything, but that the Lord is pleased to reward the united efforts of his people, and thus to encourage them to forsake not the assembling of themselves.

The entire house was filled with a wonderful power, and every believer was apparently, as it were, electrified, vivified, and they were all filled with this holy Spirit, this hallowed influence, and began to speak in foreign tongues under the influence that had come upon them. We are not sure now, but it is our opinion that this special manifestation was to the eleven apostles only, because the subsequent record is that Peter and the others of the eleven apostles addressed the multitude in these foreign tongues. We know no evidence that others of the one hundred and twenty preached in the unknown tongues on the occasion, nor that they had the power to do so.

For centuries the Lord's people have been more or less in strife respecting the holy Spirit – what it is, etc. We will not attempt here an elaboration of the subject, but refer our readers to DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. V., Chapters 8-11, where the subject is treated in great detail. Incidentally we merely notice that the holy Spirit is not a person, but the spirit, the will, mind, energy, power or disposition of a person. It is the Spirit of the Father. It is the Spirit of the Son. And it is the spirit of all who are in full harmony with these. The masculine pronoun is used because our Father and our Lord Jesus are both spoken of in the masculine gender and their spirit would properly be so referred to. Nothing has much more confused the mind of Christendom than the unscriptural theory that the holy Spirit is one of three gods, equal in power and glory. It is one of the manifestations of the one living and true God. He manifested himself in Jesus, who was "God manifest in the flesh." He manifested himself in this holy influence or power at Pentecost and since to those who received the begetting or anointing of that holy Spirit, the spirit of the Truth, and indirectly to those of the world who discerned its operation in the children of Light, and who were reproved and rebuked because of being out of harmony with the divine will.

As some erred in speaking of the holy Spirit as a "third person," so others err in the opposite direction in claiming that there is nothing of the holy Spirit except a spirit of the truth. The proper thought, we hold, is that the term ***holy Spirit*** stands for the divine will and divine power and divine truth, exercised how and

when and where the divine will purposes. The power which came upon the waiting disciples was not merely a field for the Truth, nor merely a knowledge of the truth, nor was it a person that fell upon them, nor could we think of a person being divided up and inhabiting either eleven apostles or one hundred and twenty brethren, or thousands and tens of thousands of the Lord's people in all parts of the world.

"HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER"

Our Golden Text represents the matter in clear light and in harmony with all the other Scriptures on the subject when it declares that the holy Spirit must come from the Father, not from the Son; when it declares that the Son would petition the Father to send the Spirit; when it declares that this special power or spirit of the Father would be another Comforter, instead of our Lord Jesus himself, whose going away was necessary and expedient. Had our Lord remained as a person in the flesh, he would have been hampered by the fleshly and earthly conditions, much as we are, because he could not be everywhere at once. It was preferable or expedient, therefore, that he should personally leave his disciples and appear before the Father as their Advocate, and thus secure to them the holy Spirit, which would not only represent the Father and himself, but would also represent all Truth, all righteousness, and be a channel for every one that needed blessing.

Following the miraculous sound and the electrical influences pervading the room and the manifestation of the lights upon their heads, we may be sure a considerable degree of holy joy and excitement manifested themselves amongst the believers, and this soon spread abroad and attracted a large concourse of people through curiosity, because it was stated that they were "Continually in the temple." – Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46.

It has been surmised by some that the large upper room occupied on this occasion was one of the numerous apartments connected with the temple, and that the quick gathering of 3,000 people might thus be accounted for. It was one of the annual festivals which drew the devout Jews, not only from all parts of Palestine, but also from neighboring countries. Most of them were Jews by birth, but some of them were proselytes or converts to Judaism. At first these heard various languages spoken and hastily concluded that the speakers were intoxicated, but later they discerned that the various tongues spoken represented the dialects of various people in the vast throng, so that each might hear in his own native tongue the message that was being circulated respecting Jesus, his death, resurrection, ascension, and now this miraculous outpouring of the Father's blessing at his hands, to qualify his service, to declare his message.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

The day itself is an important one. According to Jewish tradition it was the anniversary of the Law Covenant at Mt. Sinai. It therefore by contrast would be a reminder of how Christ makes free from the Law and admits to the benefits of the original Covenant all who approach the Father through him. It was a day of free giving to all in need, "According as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." (Deut. 16:10.) Thus the Lord's followers dispensed to all who were in readiness to receive the blessings granted to them through Jesus.

The flames of fire beautifully symbolize the light of Truth, the enlightenment of the mind, which comes through the begetting of the holy Spirit. This power divine was remarkably manifested in the eleven apostles, for while the multitude still recognized them as "ignorant and unlearned men," nevertheless they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus and learned of him; that they had a certain kind of enlightenment of mind and heart, which could come from no other quarter. And is not this same true of all those who have been begotten of the holy Spirit? Only a few days ago, in talking to one of the dear friends,

a carpenter, in respect to the knowledge of the Truth enlightening his mind and refreshing his heart, he added, "Yes, Brother Russell, and that is not all! Not only are my head and heart refreshed with respect to spiritual things, but without boasting I can say that the Truth has made me brighter and more proficient in every way. It gives me a better balance of mind and soundness of judgment, even in my trade as a carpenter." We believe that this is true in general. Those appealed to by the Truth are not more than ordinarily bright naturally. Indeed, according to the Scriptures, we might infer that they would be below the average, for the Apostle declares that not many wise, rich, great or learned hath God chosen, but chiefly the mean things of this world. Nevertheless it is noticeable that those who are deeply interested in Present Truth, who study it, who love it, under the guidance and instruction of the Lord's Spirit and the various helps which God hath provided for our time, are far above the average of their fellow-laborers in general intelligence. Indeed, whoever has a knowledge of the Truth has an education, whether he has ever taken a college course or not. On the contrary, it has recently been noticed that a large number of those who enjoy special earthly advantages of education gain comparatively little therefrom. For instance, note the following clipping from the *New York World* a few days ago. Evangelist E. C. Mercer, himself a reformed drunkard, addressing the students of the Northwestern University, said:

"During the last few years I have been working in the Water Street Mission in New York, and I have learned that one-third of the men that came there ragged and dirty and begging for food were college-bred. I have found them on the Bowery making up beds or waiting on tables, and I have even met them in the street-cleaning brigades. During February of last year more than 400 of them stood in the 'bread line' at our mission. Seventy-five per cent. of the prisoners at Sing Sing Prison are college-bred men."

Beyond question "the wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits," and is, as the Apostle declares, the "spirit of a sound mind." – Jas. 3:17; 2 Tim. 1:7.

THE LESSON HERE FOR US

Although we cannot agree with those who teach that repeated Pentecosts and spirit baptisms are to be expected and prayed for, we do believe that the Lord's people need to come into a similar attitude to that of the brethren who were blessed on Pentecost Day, in order to enter the favors and privileges which are ours through Christ. There was to be but one Pentecost. There never will be another, so far as the Church is concerned. The holy Spirit which there came to the Church has abode with us still, and its blessing is the privilege of those consecrated ones whom the Lord accepts and adopts into his family. But before anyone is prepared to get a proper blessing of the Lord's Spirit, he must first have the justification by faith and a heart free from the love of sin, and must present his solemn resolution to be, to do, to serve the Lord, the Truth, the brethren – his vows before he could be in the right attitude to receive a blessing and the enlightenment, the comfort, the fellowship of God's holy Spirit. Even though he be inflamed with desire to serve the Lord, the Truth and the brethren, he will do wisely to follow the course of the early Church and tarry and study and pray – that he may himself be filled with the Spirit, before he attempts to act as God's ambassador to others. Indeed, no one is authorized, from the Scriptural standpoint, to preach the Gospel much or little, except first he have received this anointing and authorization of the Spirit from above. "The Lord hath anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek." – Isa. 61:1.

While opposing the unscriptural view with respect to praying for New Pentecosts, let us not lose sight of the important fact that until we have received our share of the blessing of that first Pentecost, we cannot have the perfect peace of God, nor be properly and actively and

successfully his servants and ambassadors. Would that, at the opening of the New Year, all of the Lord's people would seek earnestly a larger measure of the holy Spirit – watching and praying thereunto, watching their words, their thoughts and deeds, the leadings of the Lord's providence, the opportunities for his service, and praying, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." And let us ask him to grant us more and more the emptying of worldly ambitions, desires, and filling more and more with the mind of Christ, the disposition of Christ. Many are finding "the VOW" very helpful along these lines, and we still commend it to all of the sacrificers in Christ Jesus, as a helping hand to keep us watchful and nearer to the Lord – under the shadow of the Almighty.

SPEAKING WITH OTHER TONGUES – R. 2926

ACTS 2:1-11

"The promise is unto you and to your children." – Acts 2:39

WAITING FOR the power from on high, the eleven apostles (and with them apparently a considerable number of believers – possibly 120 – (Acts 1:15) were rewarded with the blessing of Pentecost. They were "with one accord in one place;" they may have been expecting the blessing during the preceding nine days of their assembling, but Pentecost being a specially holy day it may have appeared to them as probable that it would bring the consummation of their hopes, and with one accord or agreement the full number were all present at the time. There is a thought here respecting the propriety of the Lord's people being at one, or in accord, in respect to the things they are seeking for and waiting for. It is to this end that the Lord has exhorted us, through the Apostle, that we forget not the assembling of ourselves together, and so much the more as we see the day drawing near – not the day of Pentecost, but a still greater and still grander day: Pentecost brought merely the first fruits of the spirit, while the day we wait for is the day of the consummation of all our hopes and of all God's promises in respect to the Church, as the Bride and joint-heir of his Son.

We cannot all come together in the literal sense, as did the apostles and the early Church on Pentecost, but we can come together into one place in another sense; we can come into the holy place, into the sanctuary or consecrated condition of heart and of life, and thus into oneness and fellowship with the Lord, and with all who are in the same holy condition, and partakers of the same blessing of the inner light of the golden candlestick, and the inner food of the table of shew-bread, and the inner communion with the Lord, represented in the golden altar and its incense. Our natural dispositions are various and their crooks and twists different; but our new natures are one, begotten of the same Father, through the same spirit. We are to seek accord as new creatures, and are to restrain, mortify and cast out the weaknesses of the flesh and the contentiousness of disposition which may be ours, accordingly – that as new creatures we may be one with the Lord and with all who are his body or Church, under the one Head or Lord, infused or energized by one spirit of obedience to the one Father, and under the control of the one law of Love.

It is not said that the holy spirit was imparted in connection with a rushing wind, but merely that there was "a sound as of a rushing wind." Neither is it said that flames or tongues of fire rested upon them, but that tongues or flames having the appearance of fire, as in the case of the burning bush, rested upon them. The holy

spirit is an invisible power, and its impartation need not of necessity have any outward demonstration. But God's purpose was the contrary of this. He desired to accompany the holy spirit with certain manifestations which would be convincing to the apostles themselves as respected their acceptance with him, and their identification as his ministers, ambassadors of the new dispensation; he wished also to make manifest the nucleus of the Gospel Church to others, to devout Jews then in Jerusalem, attending this feast; and we think it quite probable that it was God's intention also by these gifts to manifest who were the apostles and to indicate their special office in the Church.

It is not stated specifically upon whom the tongues rested; "upon each of them" might mean upon each of the eleven apostles, or it might mean upon each of the one hundred and twenty present. Whoever the tongues sat upon were filled with the holy spirit, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance; and this preaching with other tongues seems to have been done only by the eleven apostles, for the multitude, hearing them, exclaimed, "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" As for the eleven apostles, they were all Galileans, but as for the remainder of the one hundred and twenty, it is probable that the majority of them were Judeans, residents of Jerusalem. We incline, therefore, to suppose that while the whole room in which they were present was filled with the holy spirit, and the entire company present made partakers of the holy spirit, and immersed into it, and blessed thereby, yet, nevertheless, these outward manifestations of tongues and speaking miraculously were at first only given to the eleven, for the purpose of designating them as God's chosen instruments in connection with the new dispensation. We know that it was so subsequently; so that whoever received gifts of the holy spirit received them through the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

From the construction of the Greek text it is evident that these were not split tongues, on the heads of the favored ones, but rather that they were tongues of flame cloven or split off from a central or luminous body, tongues which emanated from one common center, and went to the heads of those for whom intended. It was not fire, however, but light. The tongues represented nothing akin to destruction, which fire would symbolize. They represented, on the contrary, enlightenment, knowledge, intelligence, and implied that a holy intelligence or light from the Lord had come upon the recipients, marking them as the Lord's mouthpieces; indicating that from henceforth their tongues should show forth his praise, to the blessing and enlightenment of the world. And so indeed it has been; those poor fishermen, illiterate, unlearned as respects earthly education, under the power of the Lord's spirit became mighty indeed in the pulling down of strongholds of error, and the scattering of darkness by the illumination of the minds of those prepared for the word of God's grace.

Some have made the mistake of supposing that these tongues of flame were fulfillments of the prediction of John the Baptist, who said of Christ, "He shall baptize you with the holy spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16.) This was the fulfillment of only the first part; it was merely the baptism of the holy spirit; it was not the baptism of fire; – the baptism of fire and destruction was for a totally different class. The faithful of the Jews were to receive the baptism of the holy spirit, and the unfaithful majority of them were to receive the baptism of fiery trouble, and they did receive it a little further along. After the holy spirit, coming upon the infant Church at Pentecost, had searched, sifted and winnowed out of the Jewish dispensation all of the true "wheat," gathering it into the garner of the Gospel (spirit) dispensation, then the fire came upon the "chaff." (Luke 3:17.) The Apostle speaks of this, calling it wrath, saying "Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." – 1 Thess. 2:16.

The tongues of light which came upon the faithful at Pentecost did not continue with them, – even as the dove, which was seen

descending upon Jesus, did not continue to be seen. Both the dove and the flame of light were merely outward representations, not to deceive, but for the purpose of teaching a great lesson, for the purpose of convincing that the promised blessing and power had come. The Lord's people who since come under the influence of the holy spirit have neither signs of flames nor doves, nor sounds of rushing wind; nor do they speak miraculously. They, nevertheless, come into and are made partakers of the holy spirit, which no longer uses these outward manifestations because they are no longer necessary; the Church having been established, and the fact of the holy spirit's impartation having been demonstrated, we now are to accept the same by faith, and to permit it to dwell in us richly, and to cultivate in our hearts and lives the ***fruits*** of the spirit, instead of expecting them or other things as miraculous ***gifts***.

The tongues of light are a forceful illustration of the fact that God purposed to use human tongues as his agencies in promulgating his message and calling out his elect from the world. An energy of soul evidently went with the outward demonstration, giving a courage to the apostles of which previously, as humble and unlearned men, they were naturally deficient. Note, for instance, how it led Peter, who, fifty-three days before had denied the Lord, saying, "I know not the man," for fear of the Jews, to now courageously stand up in the midst of those very Jews, and to proclaim him as his Master, as the Son of God risen from the dead and ascended up on high; as the great Mediator and High Priest of the new order. It gave him the courage to charge home to the hearts of his hearers their responsibility for the crime. So also the other disciples, who previously had fled from their arrested Master, were now courageous to tell forth his praise. Not only had they become convinced, by the proofs received, respecting his resurrection and his ascension, but now these proofs were added to by the fulfillment of his promises, evidencing the fact that he had ascended to the Father, and that he had been favorably received, and that these gifts of the spirit were evidences of the return of divine favor toward them, – of their acceptance in the Beloved One, and of their right and authority to go forth in his name and to declare remission of sins to all the penitent who would come unto the Father through him.

At this particular season of the year the city of Jerusalem was crowded with visitors from various parts of the world. We are to remember that millions of the ten-tribed kingdom, called Israel, were taken captive, and later millions more of the two-tribe kingdom, called Judah, was also taken captive, to Babylon; and that these millions were scattered as immigrants in the various districts of Assyria and Babylonia, where they settled down, making these strange lands their home, so that when the opportunity for returning from captivity came in the days of Cyrus, and by his edict, only a very small proportion of the two tribes, and a still smaller proportion of the ten-tribes, returned to Palestine – the great majority preferring to remain in the countries where they at one time had been captives, but where, during their long exile, they had become at home and formed attachments. From that time on all distinction as between Israel and Judah was at an end; and all were recognized as at first, as Israelites, and all came under the general name of Jews. Thus it was that our Lord and the apostles addressed the people as Israelites and Jews, using the terms interchangeably, and that they spoke of the dispersed ones indiscriminately, as Jews and as Israelites also.

It was at seasons like the Passover and Pentecost that numbers of devout Jews, not only from all parts of Judea and Galilee, went to Jerusalem, but also the "dispersed" Jews of devout spirit from the surrounding countries came thither, to worship the Lord and to obey the command requiring all his faithful to assemble themselves before him at Jerusalem. Thus it was that at the time of these visits the city would sometimes have a crowded population of from two to three millions of

people, chiefly adults. The city was crowded at the time of this Pentecostal blessing, and a great concourse of people was drawn together by the miraculous manifestation of divine power amongst the disciples. Some of these, hearing the apostles speaking in various languages which they could not understand, passed on, declaring that they had no interest in the matter, and that probably the speakers were intoxicated, and did not know what they were saying themselves; but others recognized their own tongues and dialects, some apostles speaking in one tongue, some in another; and when they perceived that all of the speakers were Galileans they were astounded, especially in view of the fact that they were unlearned men. The miracle helped to impress the situation upon their minds, and we may be sure that the words spoken were also powerful. We cannot suppose that the Lord would make a special manifestation of power without an equal manifestation of wisdom. Indeed, wherever we find people claiming various gifts and powers, and find these to be accompanied by nothing that is reasonable and logical and comprehensible, we are justified in doubting that the matter is of the Lord at all. It is reasonable to suppose that when the holy spirit gives utterance it will utter that which is good and reasonable and sound of logic, and not folly. And so we read that the hearers said, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the mighty ***works of God***."

The words of their discourse are not given us in detail here, but we can readily discern that the mighty works of God which filled their own hearts and minds were those wonderful things which they had just been learning from the Lord, viz., that God's time had come for conferring the blessing long before promised through Abraham; – that Jesus was the Messiah, whom the Father had sent, and whose death was necessary in order to the carrying out of the plan, as our Lord had declared to them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) It was theirs further to declare another wonderful work of God, – that in addition to Messiah, the Head, God was about to gather out of the people a little flock to be joint heirs with Messiah, in the Kingdom, preparatory to its establishment for the blessing of the world. We may be sure that it was the true Gospel that they preached, and not the terrible mixture of confusion about hell torments, which since "the dark ages" has falsely claimed the right to be called the Gospel of Christ. They preached the Gospel of salvation, and not a message of damnation; and their message was in the power and demonstration of the spirit.

The miraculous gift of tongues is no longer with us, yet the same spirit, received by us, dwelling in us richly and abounding more and more, gives us utterance, also, in respect to the ***wonderful works of God***. This is still true of all the Royal Priesthood, the consecrated. As the Apostle expressed it in his day, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye (for yourselves); for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19,20.) The enlightenment of our understanding has shown us Jesus as the Redeemer of the world, and our share in his redemptive work; and also our acceptance with the Father, through him, to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom, and to be fellow-servants with him in the present time, in bearing the reproaches of the true Gospel in this time, when the great Adversary is deceiving the world in respect to these matters, putting light for darkness and darkness for light.

More and more we, too, speak with ***other tongues***. Those whose tongues had blasphemed the holy name now give thanks and praise; those who had ignorantly misrepresented the divine character and plan now vie with each other in showing forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. The influence of the holy spirit transforms our sentiments and expressions respecting the brethren also, and respecting the world, so that instead of hatred and anger and malice

we have love and gentleness and patience; and instead of our tongues showing forth envy and bitterness and pride, worldly ambition, etc., they show forth the new mind in gentleness and wisdom, in helpfulness and love – toward all men, and especially toward the household of faith. These, our new tongues, and the new living epistles which they represent to our families, our neighbors and the world, are beautifully expressed by the Prophet to be our "song" – our praise, our acknowledgement to God for his grace and truth; as it is written, "He hath put a new song into my mouth, even the loving kindness of our God."

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION SHED FORTH – R. 1416

ACTS 2:1-12

"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, . . . and he will show you things to come." – John 16:13

VERSES 1-4. The most notable day in the history of the Church is the day of Pentecostal blessing which followed our Lord's ascension. It marks definitely the beginning of Church history by marking the beginning of the Church. For although the disciples were called, and followed the great Teacher during the three and a half years of his ministry and sacrifice, they were not ***recognized*** by God as his sons until Pentecost, when the spirit of adoption was given.

True, they had consecrated themselves; they had even left all to follow Christ; but yet they were under ***condemnation*** as sinners and could not be recognized or treated as sons until their sins had been atoned for by the great sin-offering of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." For this they must wait. And even after the Redeemer had "poured out his soul unto death" as our sin-offering, and after he had been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, they must still wait until by the gift of the spirit of adoption God should recognize them as sons and empower them to teach in his name the forgiveness of sins: they must wait until he who ***gave*** our redemption price should ascend on high and there appear in the presence of God and offer to justice that sin-offering ***on our behalf*** – making it applicable to all those who believe in and obey him. The Pentecostal blessing was ***of*** the Father, but ***by*** the Son (Acts 2:33). It was the Father's recognition of the merit of the sin-offering.

True, the Master had sent them out to declare the Kingdom at hand, etc., and they returned rejoicing, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name;" but the power by which they did their miracles then, while it was holy spirit or holy power, was not their own, but the Lord's. He sent them forth in his name and ***gave them power*** over all manner of diseases, etc., but they received no power, no other recognition, direct from God, until Pentecost. Our Lord Jesus had the holy spirit or holy power, and that without limit, because he was a holy, harmless, undefiled son (John 3:34), but all others were debarred from this, because they were sinners until he had made reconciliation for iniquity. The disciples, then, had merely imputed or delegated holy power or holy spirit until the sacrifice was made and offered and until the Pentecostal blessing gave evidence to them and to us and to all that God accepted of Christ's sacrifice – "the just for the unjust." – 1 Pet. 3:18.

To this agrees the statement that "the holy spirit was not yet given, ***because*** Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39); and that other

statement that to "as many [of the house of servants] as received him, to them gave he liberty [ability, power, privilege] to ***become*** SONS OF GOD." – John 1:12.

VERSES 4-12. Concerning the ***gifts*** of the spirit which followed the begetting by the spirit in the early Church, for the purpose of attesting God's favor to the newly begotten "sons," as well as for manifesting them as teachers to those without, and the distinction between ***those gifts*** and the ***fruit-gifts*** of the spirit which now give evidence of divine favor and begetting, the student is referred to the leading article of this issue of this journal.

THE HOLY SPIRIT – R. 2088

ACTS 2:1-13

"They were all filled with the holy spirit." – Acts 2:4

OUR last lesson contained a promise of the holy spirit, the "Comforter," and instructed the apostles and believing brethren to tarry at Jerusalem until thus endued with power from on high for the work of the ministry, in harmony with the Lord's commission, to preach the gospel to every creature. In that lesson we noted the methods adopted by our Lord to prove to the disciples his resurrection and the change from human to spirit nature, and his ascension to the Father, in harmony with his declaration that he would go into a far country to be invested with his kingly authority, and would come again and receive his faithful ones unto himself. Some have endeavored to make of this Pentecostal outpouring of the holy spirit upon the Church a fulfilment of the Lord's promise to "come again." But nothing could be further from the meaning of the Lord's words and from the expectations of the apostles, as can be readily proved. While telling them that he would come again and receive them unto himself, he also told them that in the interim of his absence they were to preach the gospel to all the world, for a witness, before the end of this age. He assured them that during this interim of his absence they would suffer persecution and be despised of all men for his sake; that they were incompetent for so great a work, and therefore must not begin it until they would be endued "with power from on high" – the promise of the Father, the evidence of the Father's acceptance, the foretaste of his blessing, which shall be completed and fulfilled on the glorification of the Church in the Kingdom. (Rom. 8:23.) The Lord did not represent that the holy spirit would be himself, but merely a power or influence emanating from the Father and from himself. – Acts 1:4,5.

None of the apostles had the idea that the holy spirit was the Lord, nor that its outpouring represented the second advent. Quite to the contrary, they spoke of this outpouring as being only the "earnest" or "first fruits" of the spirit, a divine blessing upon the Church. The Apostle Peter in preaching under the power of the holy spirit, after declaring the death and resurrection of Christ, said, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) There is no intimation here that "this" outpouring of the spirit was the second coming of the Lord; but to the contrary it is stated that the Lord at the time was highly exalted, with the Father, and had shed forth this spirit or power upon his Church; having received authority of the Father to shed it forth, by virtue of the atonement which he had accomplished by the

sacrifice of himself.

There could not be better proof that the apostles did not understand the outpouring of the holy spirit to be the second coming of Christ, the establishment of his Kingdom, etc., than the fact that speaking under the influence of this miraculous power, they continually and repeatedly exhorted the Church to wait for and to expect still greater blessings at the Lord's return, assuring them that what they had already received was but a foretaste. Not merely one of the apostles so points forward to the second coming of Christ, but all of them without exception – Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John in their most earnest exhortations point to the second advent of the Lord as the greatest hope and inspiration for faith, courage, patient endurance and hope, for the things that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those expositors of Scripture, therefore, who endeavor to turn the attention of God's people from the hopes set before us in the gospel, of the "glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," so as to induce them to believe that our Lord's second advent took place at Pentecost, are guilty of gross perversion of the Word of God. And from the abundance of the testimony against such a view and the absence of all testimony in its favor, it seems difficult to see how their course can be anything short of a wilful "wresting of the Scriptures."

And in view of the fact that some of those who thus pervert the divine Word, so as to make its testimony of none effect through their traditions and false theories, are seemingly earnest people, it behooves all who would not be blinded to rid their minds of everything in the way of prejudice in coming to the Word of the Lord; that we may see light in his light and not confuse ourselves by our own or other men's darkness. How strange it would be indeed for the Apostle John in his great vision (Revelation), nearly sixty years after this Pentecostal blessing, to be shown and to be commanded to record for our information, symbolic pictures of the events of this Gospel age, and of its close, and of the second coming of Christ, and of the Millennial judgment, and of the final destruction of Satan and evil, and of the introduction of the everlasting Kingdom beyond – how strange and inconsistent all this would be if our Lord's second advent took place sixty years before, and the beloved disciple John, although blessed by the holy spirit and especially inspired to be an instructor of the Church, were left in total ignorance of the truth and inspired to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus." Come quickly!

(2) It is not said that the holy spirit came as a rushing wind, but merely that a sound came, as of a rushing mighty wind. A wind is an ***invisible power***, and so is the holy spirit an ***invisible power***. The choice, therefore, of a sound of wind as a symbol of the holy spirit, and as a means for drawing the attention of the apostles to the wonderful blessing coming upon them, was an apt one. We cannot think what would have better represented the invisible power with which they were imbued. The word "spirit" is from the very same Greek and Hebrew words as the words "breath" and "wind:" not that the holy spirit is merely breath or wind, but that nothing else so well symbolizes God's ***invisible power***.

(3-11) The cloven tongues, that is, the split or parted tongues of light, like fire, which sat upon each of them, were also evidently symbolic, representing illumination, – the intelligence which comes through the holy spirit. The holy spirit might have come upon them with equal power without either the sound of rushing wind or the tongues of light; but these accessories were no doubt intended to help the Church to grasp the situation, to expect and to appreciate the blessing then conferred and to make the matter the more notable and satisfactory to them.

The number of believers who were together in the upper room at the time of the outpouring of the holy spirit was about one hundred and twenty. They were all immersed in the holy spirit, because the holy spirit filled the

house. But whether or not the tongues of light rested upon any others than the apostles we cannot surely know. It may have rested upon them only, by way of distinguishing them as mouthpieces of the holy spirit. Certain it is that in the subsequent preaching with various tongues there seems good reason for supposing that the apostles only preached; because it was said of the speakers, "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" We cannot suppose that the entire company of one hundred and twenty were all Galileans. It is quite probable, indeed, that the majority of them were Judeans; but the eleven apostles were all from Galilee, and hence it is probable that they alone did the preaching; and probably also that they alone had the manifestations of the tongues of light in the upper room.

The number of Israelites, otherwise called Jews, residing in the surrounding nations "dispersed amongst the Gentiles," where they were engaged in business, was much greater than the number who permanently resided in Palestine. Yet there was amongst them a reverence for the Holy Land and the Law; and the latter commanded an assembling, at least representatively, at the Passover or at Pentecost. In consequence great numbers came to Jerusalem from the surrounding countries as representatives of families and communities to bear tithes and to offer prayers and sacrifices at the temple, on these occasions. "From a census taken in the time of Nero, more than 2,700,000 were gathered at the Passover, and still greater numbers came to Pentecost." The larger numbers in attendance at Pentecost was doubtless because this feast came in the Summer. These gathered multitudes were not drawn from idle curiosity, but were "devout men."

The countries from which many of them came are mentioned, and include a radius of several hundred miles and the most enlightened portions of the world at that time. Although Greek was the ruling language of that period in official matters and amongst the learned, the majority of the people evidently understood little more than their native tongues and dialects, nor did the character of the worship at Jerusalem make it necessary that they should be very fluent in one language. They came together to worship and to present offerings rather than to hear preaching. Yet doubtless the Lord's arrangement through Moses with reference to this feast had in view the very opportunities for publishing the good tidings recorded in this lesson. The miracle of speaking various tongues was appreciated by some at least of these representatives of true religion throughout the world. And the testimony of the apostles heard there was no doubt carried to every quarter; if not in sufficient power to convert to Christ, at least in sufficient measure to prepare the way in some degree for the message which was to be carried throughout the world by the apostles and believers in general who subsequently, as a result of persecution in Jerusalem, were scattered also and "went everywhere" preaching the gospel.

(12,13) Although the people mentioned were religious, "devout men," it does not appear that the miracle of the apostles speaking in various languages did more at first than to excite curiosity in some, while with others it was attributed to an evil influence – intoxication. Thus Satan, who endeavored to calumniate our Lord as a "wine bibber" and possessed of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, would now fain hinder the people from hearing the message of the gospel preached with the power of the holy spirit sent down from heaven, and accompanied with wonderful manifestations. Then as now the servants of God were traduced even by "devout men."
– See 2 Cor. 6:8.

THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST – R. 5830

ACTS 2:1-13

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" – 1 Corinthians 3:16

PENTECOST was a notable day in the Jewish calendar. It marked the fiftieth day in the harvest – after the gathering of the first ripe sheaf. Our Lord in His glorious resurrected condition was the Antitype of that sheaf, the First-fruit of God in the great Plan of Redemption. The first forty days, as we have seen, were used in giving occasional lessons to the disciples – helping them over the difficulties of their position, getting them properly started, with proper faith in the resurrection, to make a good witness and to gather out the Lord's jewels from amongst men. But when Jesus left them at the end of the forty days, He instructed them not to begin their ministry at once, but to wait until they would be endued with power from on High – by the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, they waited ten days, and then their waiting was rewarded by the outpouring of His Spirit upon them in the upper room on the fiftieth day, Pentecost. They did transact just one item of business during those ten days; but it was without authority from the Lord, and was never recognized by Him. It consisted in casting lots for a successor to Judas. As they cast lots on only two men, it followed that one of the two must be the choice of the lots. But the Lord never recognized the matter, and we hear nothing more of Matthias whom they chose. Instead, in due time God brought forth St. Paul – "not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles."

APPEARED IN GOD'S PRESENCE

When our Lord ascended, the Apostle declares, He appeared in the presence of God for us – for His Church, for all who would comply with the terms and conditions of discipleship. (Hebrews 9:24.) He did not appear for the world, but merely for us. He loved the world, He died for the world, and He is yet to bless the world; but the time for the blessing of the world must wait until first the Divine Program in respect to the Church shall have been carried out.

How much of our Lord's time was spent in going to the Heavenly Throne, and how much of the ten days was necessary for the return of the Holy Spirit, we do not know; but we do know from the Apostle's words that the Holy Spirit sent forth upon the waiting disciples in the upper room was the testimony to them that Jesus' work was satisfactory to the Father, that the Father gave the Holy Spirit to Him for His Church, and that Jesus shed it forth. – Acts 2:33.

The events of that day of Pentecost were very valuable to the Church at that time, but have been equally valuable to all of the Lord's members. The Scriptures represent that all who are received into God's family receive a begetting of the Holy Spirit; and this begetting was what Pentecost meant to those waiting ones in the upper room. From that time onward they were sons of God; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" their Lord. (Romans 8:17.) And so it is with us who have come into the Body of Christ since Pentecost. We do not receive special manifestations of Divine power, such as the cloven tongues that came upon those disciples; but we do receive from God the same Holy Spirit which they received.

MEANING OF THE PENTECOSTAL BLESSING

The Lord represents Jesus and His Church under the figure of a great Priest – Jesus was the Head of that Priest; the Apostles were the first members of the Body, under the Head; and all the Church of Christ from then till now are members in particular of the same

Body, the same Church. The Holy Spirit came with an outward manifestation upon Jesus, the Head of the Church, that we might know thus that He was accepted by the Father. Then at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with an outward manifestation upon the disciples, in order that they might know that they had been received into the same fellowship, as members of the same Body.

But it was not necessary for us to have an outward demonstration today; for this pouring out of God's blessing was upon the Church as a whole; and as we come into the Church of Christ by a full consecration of our hearts to do the Lord's will, and with full trust in the work of Jesus, we receive the Spirit and are counted in as members of that Church Body, though without any outward demonstration whatever.

We can see a necessity for the outward demonstration in the case of the Apostles for two reasons: First, they were Jews, and had believed in Jesus, had made their consecration and had been received into discipleship by Him. But the Father could not receive any into sonship until after Jesus had died. Additionally, the Father could not recognize any human beings as His children and grant them full forgiveness of sins, full reconciliation and an entrance into His family, until Jesus, as the great High Priest, had not only died, but had ascended up on High and proffered or made applicable the merit of His death on our behalf. And so we read respecting the Apostles before Christ's death: "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." – John 7:39.

There had been no human sons of God recognized from the time Adam, the first of these sons, sinned, until Jesus came as the Son of God. The Jews were members of the House of Servants, as we read: "Moses verily was faithful in all His House as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His own House, whose House are we." (Hebrews 3:5, 6.) The Pentecostal blessing, therefore, was the beginning of the recognition of the followers of Jesus as sons of God and heirs of God's promise.

GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Another matter: At Pentecost the Lord gave gifts to the Apostles, and to the remainder of the Church through them. These gifts were represented in the ability to speak with various tongues and in power to perform miracles – heal the sick, etc. Evidently these gifts were necessary for the establishment of the Church; but they must have all expired when the Apostles, through whom alone they were bestowed upon others, fell asleep in death. But while God has not continued the gifts with the Church, He has promised something still better; i.e., the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits are more valuable than the gifts, because they represent character and not merely powers. – 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13.

The fruits of the Spirit are meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love; and these evidence that the individual possessing them has become a member of the Church of Christ, and has been begotten of the Holy Spirit. Much therefore as we rejoice that the Apostles had the gifts and afterwards cultivated the fruits, we are glad that we now have the fruits of the Spirit.

One of the gifts of the Spirit was manifested by one of the Apostles immediately – the power of speaking with unknown tongues. They were all Galileans, and therefore used to only the one dialect. The testimony, however, is that under the Divine power of the Holy Spirit they spoke in various languages so that the people of the countries represented by those languages understood clearly and were astonished, saying, "Are not all these which speak Galileans, and how hear we every man in our own tongue?" – Acts 2:7, 8.

We are not to understand that the miracle was in the hearing, but in the speaking. It was not

that all the people from the different lands heard the same utterance, as though it had been in their own language, as stated for them, but that the different Apostles speaking these different tongues were all heard by the people and appreciated by the people who used those tongues. It was a miracle, surely, and had the designed effect. Not merely was it a convincing power and experience for the Apostles themselves and for the other believers of that time, but it became a witness to the holy Jews who had gathered at Jerusalem from all the nations of the world.

These annual gatherings at Jerusalem were directly commanded by the Lord through Moses, and were observed by all the Jews who remained loyal to God and His Word. If they had moved into other countries and were located there for business reasons, they nevertheless came regularly every year to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. It was these reverential people who were especially blessed at Pentecost. For although some of the number tried to explain away the phenomenon by saying that the Apostles had evidently drunk too freely of grape juice, new wine, nevertheless, apparently the majority of those who heard were provoked with such an interpretation and took more readily to what the Apostles said, and realized in time that they were all telling the same glorious Message of the love of God, though telling it in various languages, so that all present might understand.

A TEMPLE OF GOD

The figure of a temple is variously used in respect to the Church. Each Christian is spoken of as being a temple of the Holy Spirit after he receives the begetting of the Spirit. Each congregation might be considered the Temple of God. And the Church as a whole when gathered to the Heavenly condition will be God's Temple, in that God will dwell in them. According to another figure, each Christian is a living stone in preparation for the great Temple of the future, now being chiseled, polished, made ready for his place in the Temple above.

The thought is that as God in olden times was represented in the Tabernacle by the Shekinah glory of the Most Holy, and was also represented in the literal temple of Jerusalem, so He is represented now in all those who are begotten by His Holy Spirit, and will be represented further by all who walk in harmony with their spirit-begetting and continue to abide in the Lord's love.

7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?
8 "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?
9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
10 "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
11 "Cretans and Arabs---we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."
12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Acts 2:7-12

ST. PETER'S PENTECOSTAL SERMON – R. 5831

ACTS 2:21-39

"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." – Acts 2:21

TODAY'S lesson is a most interesting Bible Study; for it covers a wide range of Truth. The Apostles, in harmony with Jesus' instructions, had waited in the upper room for the Pentecostal blessing, as necessary to their qualification before beginning their great work as the representatives and mouthpieces of Jesus and Jehovah. It came on the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection, in harmony with the type. – Leviticus 23:15-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20.

The Apostles received the begetting of the Holy Spirit and with it certain outward manifestations of miraculous power, which in turn they were privileged to communicate to all believers by the laying on of their hands. These special "gifts of the Spirit" were evidently intended to assist in the establishment of the Church and to mark the Apostles as the special representatives of God. These were but eleven in number, until St. Paul was received of the Lord, and became "not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles." (2 Cor. 12:11.) We have these Apostles still with us, represented by their teachings.

Although, later on, certain Bishops of the Church claimed to be Apostles also, they never have had any authority according to the Bible, never have been able to convey any of the miraculous gifts and are referred to by Jesus as falsely claiming authority which they do not possess. (Revelation 2:2.) With the death of the Apostles and the death of those to whom they had committed these gifts, all such gifts necessarily ceased, being supplanted by the fruits of the Spirit, developed through knowledge, faith and obedience.

SYNOPSIS OF ST. PETER'S SERMON

The eleven Apostles, exercising their gift of tongues, began to talk to the assembled crowd of Jews who were worshiping at Jerusalem – not merely residents of Palestine, but thousands from all parts of the world, gathered at Jerusalem at that season in harmony with the demands of the Law, to worship the Lord. From their dress, etc., the Apostles were recognized as Galileans. Much astonishment therefore was manifested when they were heard talking in the various tongues of the various nations. At first some thought that they were intoxicated and uttering merely peculiar sounds; but presently the multitude began to gather themselves to one and another of the Apostles as they heard their own language spoken. This not only called attention to the Apostles, but also manifested a Divine power and made their Message the more impressive.

The essence of the preaching was that Jesus, who had been crucified, had risen from the dead and had now shed forth this miraculous power upon His followers. This led to the mention of the prophecy of David which foretold the resurrection of Messiah, saying, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol" – Hades. (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27.) The Apostles pointed out that this was fulfilled in Jesus, in that God raised Him from the dead; but that it was never fulfilled in the Prophet David, who on the contrary was still dead in his sepulchre, awaiting resurrection. David, as a prophet, had merely foretold the resurrection of Jesus.

With various details the preaching went on, explaining the righteousness of Jesus, the beauties of His teaching, the wickedness of those who had crucified Him without a cause, and showing how the entire Jewish nation was guilty before God, because as a people they were bound by their Law Covenant and the action of their officials had brought condemnation and guilt upon the whole people. Three thousand believed. The case was so plain that they were pricked to the heart – they realized that Jesus was the Son of God, and that a great crime had been committed in crucifying Him. With fear

and sorrow they cried out, "What shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent" – God is gracious; He will forgive you. In further explanation, they were told that they and their rulers had done this wicked deed in ignorance, and that God would very graciously forgive those who would acknowledge their sin and call upon Him for forgiveness. They did so; they made a consecration of their lives to God, and became followers of Jesus.

DIVINE FAVOR ABOUT TO RETURN TO ISRAEL

The Bible declares that the Jewish people, because of their rejection of Messiah, were cut off from God's favor. Nevertheless the time is at hand when they shall be brought back again to the favor of God. Their eyes have been holden for more than eighteen centuries now, as are the eyes of the world in general. Only the few have the eyes of their understanding open to see the Truth respecting these matters. St. Paul avers this, saying, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." – 2 Corinthians 4:4.

But through the Prophet, God has assured us that in due time all the blind eyes will be opened and all the deaf ears will be unstopped. (Isaiah 35:5.) To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, will eventually come a full knowledge of the grace of God through Christ. It will then be for them to accept or reject intelligently. The rejectors will be wicked in a sense that none of the world are wicked now, because their wrong-doings are largely based upon ignorance and superstition. When brought to the full light, their crisis, or judgment, will be to everlasting life if they accept and obey the Lord, or to everlasting death if they sin against and wilfully reject the light and opportunities of that blessed Millennial Day.

Respecting the Jews in that coming time, it is written that they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn because of Him; and that the Lord at that time will pour upon them the spirit of prayer and of supplication. (Zechariah 12:8-10.) But that return of God's favor to Natural Israel will not come until Spiritual Israel shall first have been completed. Bible Students believe that we are now at the dawning of the New Dispensation, that the Church class will soon be completed and glorified with the Savior in His Kingdom, and that then, forthwith, God's mercy will begin to operate toward the Jews again. This seems to be the clear teaching of St. Paul in Romans 11:25-32.

THE CURSE TO BE ROLLED AWAY

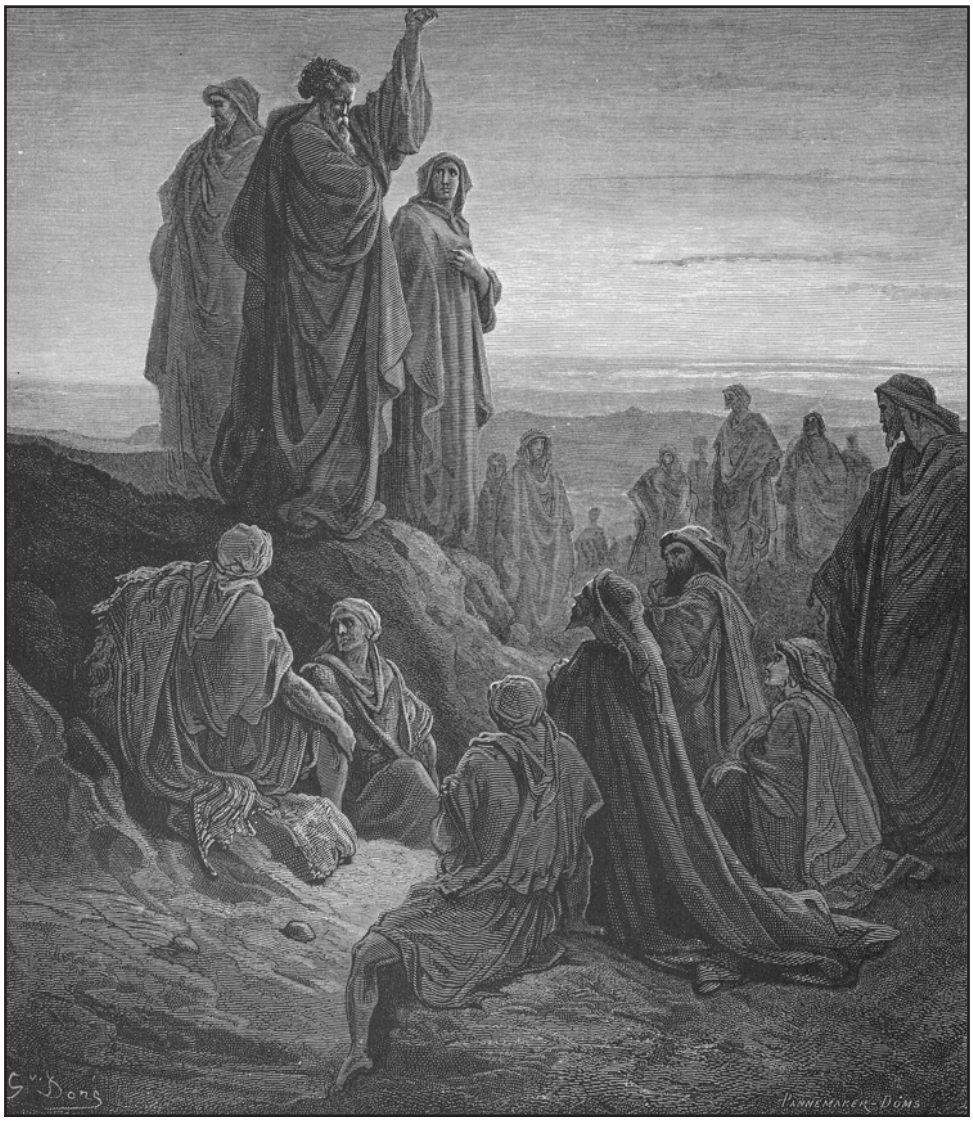
Another item of special importance in the lesson is that the Hell to which Jesus went was not Hell-fire, but the grave, the state of death. God did not raise Him up from the Fire, but raised Him from the dead. We are to remember that this same word – Hell, Sheol, Hades – is used in the Bible respecting all mankind. All the good and the bad – old and young, male and female, of every nation – go down to the Bible Hell; and according to the Bible they sleep there, awaiting the resurrection Morning and the awakening of all the dead – "every man in his own order" – not all at once. – 1 Corinthians 15:23.

The Bible represents that we are now in a night time, in which Satan is "the prince of this world," and Sin and Death reign. But it pictures the New Dispensation of Messiah's Kingdom as the glorious dawning of the New Day of blessing for mankind, in which the curse of sin and death will be rolled away and the blessing of the Lord through Messiah's Kingdom will extend to every member of the race, giving all an opportunity for eternal life. This will not be the same opportunity that is granted to the Church at the present time – not an opportunity for glory, honor and immortality on the spirit plane, as the Church have – but an opportunity of returning to human perfection, to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT – ITS BEAUTY

Here we note the beauty of the 21st verse –

our Golden Text. The death of Jesus guarantees that all who will call upon the Lord in sincerity of heart will be saved from sin and death. It guarantees that all shall be brought to the condition where they will understand sufficiently to desire to call for this blessing. The heathen, the majority of people of civilized lands, and the Jews, have no such hearing ears now. Only the few out of every nation have yet received this great blessing. Only these, brought back into relationship with God, have yet been rescued from their alienated condition; and they are to be ultimately saved in the First Resurrection, to glory, honor, immortality and a share in the Kingdom of Messiah. Through these, ultimately the blessing of light and knowledge and uplifting influences will reach every member of the race, to afford all an opportunity for life everlasting in a world-wide Eden.



The Apostles Preaching The Gospel by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. . . . 'And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'
Acts 2:14,21

SAVE YOURSELVES FROM THIS GENERATION – R. 4307

ACTS 2:32-42

"They continued steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in prayer."
– Acts 2:42

LESS than two months had elapsed since the Apostle Peter denied his Lord with cursing. But today's lesson shows him the leader of the apostles and the special mouthpiece of the Lord in the opening work of the New Dispensation at Pentecost. How marvelous is the change from weakness to strength, which may come to those who are rightly exercised by life's experiences, as he was! His very stumbling strengthened his character, by arousing him to the necessity of taking the right stand at any cost. Each of God's children should learn this lesson--and should be helped by his defeats, as well as by his victories.

One of the Apostle's promises is to this effect – that "all things shall work together for good to those who love the Lord" with loyal hearts.

St. Peter preached a most direct sermon, taking for his text the miraculous events of Pentecost, which had drawn the crowd together. He had no apologies to make, but declared himself and his brethren disciples of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus' claim to the office had been abundantly demonstrated by his mighty works and words, "Never man spake like this man." Did they query if this were not the same Jesus that had been crucified, less than two months before? The query was answered most pointedly. Yes, with wicked hands you crucified and slew the Lord of glory. Did they ask how could a Messiah thus ignominiously suffer and how could a dead Messiah be of any use – of whom they preached? The Apostle's answer was a ready one, that it pleased God that a suffering Saviour should be provided and that his death should be the redemption price for Adam and his race; and on this account forgiveness of sins might now be preached. Proceeding he declared that our Lord was not a dead Messiah, but a living one, for, although put to death in the flesh, God had raised him from the dead, and that his disciples were witnesses of the fact, and of his ascension.

The account given us is a meager one, but we can imagine the Apostle saying, "Let me prove to you from the prophets, whom you acknowledge, that these very things were foretold of the Messiah, Jesus; for instance, the most remarkable thing of all, his Resurrection. Did not the Prophet David foretell of the same, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol, hades the grave); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption'! This, "said Peter," was not true of the Prophet David. He died. His soul was not saved from sheol. He still awaits resurrection. But all of this was apparently true of Messiah, whom David, in the figure, represented. Christ's soul was not left in hades. God raised him from the dead the third day. Now he is highly exalted – a Prince and mighty Saviour, able to save you, able to save all who come to him; for the Father hath highly exalted him, that he might be the Saviour of you and of the world, not only as respects spiritual interests, but our temporal interests as well."

JOEL'S PROPHECY OF PENTECOST

Proceeding, the Apostle quoted Joel's prophecy and showed that a portion of it foretold the Pentecostal blessing. He was not led of the spirit to show that there were two parts to that prophecy, and that only one part was fulfilled at that time, and that the other part was to be fulfilled afterward. "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" will be fulfilled in the future, after the second coming of Christ. That was not yet "meat in due season." However, the quotation was sufficient for its intended purpose. His hearers were pricked to the heart – cut to the heart. They felt terribly, as they thought how true were his words, and how apt his Scripture quotation. They saw themselves as members of their nation red-handed murderers of the Messiah, for whom they had been looking for centuries. The great trouble which would certainly come upon their

nation, and to which their prophets referred, they saw would be a reasonable penalty for their great sin. What must they do?

Contrition and repentance must necessarily precede any thoroughgoing reformation of character – then or now. If, therefore, any one shall read these words and realize that he himself has been living carelessly, as respects his blessings of God and his faithfulness to the Truth, it is well that he should awaken from his lethargy with a start, knowing assuredly that the end of that way will not have the divine approval. Such should cry out to the Lord for help from the weaknesses of his own nature, and from the delusions and snares of the Adversary; peradventure he may be delivered. In answer to their query the Apostle declared most graciously, "Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. The matter is bad enough. The guilt is great as it is; but surely the Lord knows that those poor men who cried "Crucify him!" and those who helped to do it were, to a large degree, under the influence of our great Adversary, through ignorance and superstition and blindness, into which he had led them. Doubtless the number of those who have sinned wilfully against clear light and knowledge and opportunity, on the contrary, is small, especially if we exclude those sins attributable to weaknesses through the heredity of sin.

THE GOSPEL OF MERCY

The Pentecostal message was a Gospel of mercy, of forgiveness, of sympathy, even for those who had crucified the Lord. Like the other sermons of this Apostle, and like the sermons of all the apostles, this sermon contained not one suggestion of eternal torment, but was full of mercy and grace – "speaking peace through Jesus Christ our Lord." The result was that three thousand were prompt to accept Jesus as the Messiah. They were convinced by their reason and by the evidences presented in the sermon by the Apostle and others of the brethren; thus they complied with the advice of the Apostle. Temporarily their sins were covered by the merit of the Lord's sacrifice, but for the full blotting out of those sins, they, with others, must wait for the second coming and the resurrection. The new bodies of all the faithful in Christ will be without spot or blemish. All sin will have been blotted out. Thus, as the Apostle Paul says, "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." – 1 Cor. 15:43,44.

St. Peter's message to them was, "Repent ye therefore, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Spirit; for the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call."

Christ's sacrifice for sins was not intended to justify people living in sin, but to justify those who, renouncing sin, sought to live separate from it and to come into harmony with God. This is still our message. No one has a right to alter or amend it in any degree. The divine law condemns sin in the flesh still. The divine provision for the covering of the sins of those who believe in Jesus applies only to such as seek to put away sin, and to strive for righteousness. For such alone are all the divine arrangements and blessings. Baptism for the "remission of sins" was to the Jew only, to those who had already been baptized into Moses in the sea and the cloud. The sins thus figuratively washed away did not include original sin, with its death penalty, but merely minor transgressions against the Mosaic Law on the part of the Covenant of the people. The symbolic washing represented a return to loyalty, to obedience to God, to the extent of their ability, so far as their hearts were concerned. Thus coming into accord with Moses, the typical Messiah, they would be by faith transferred to his antitype, Christ.

This washing or cleansing of the Jews, preparatory to their acceptance in Christ, continued until the middle wall of partition was broken down between Jew and Gentile,

until the natural branches, those who did not receive fellowship in the Body of Christ, were broken off. Since then, baptism for the remission of sins, John's baptism, is entirely wrong, according to the Scriptures. (For details on this see DAWN-STUDIES, Vol. VI., Chapter 10.)

The Apostle pointed out that the promise of the great blessing through Messiah belonged to Israel according to the flesh, and that those promises had not yet lost their vitality – had not yet lapsed. Hence it was for them and their children, as well as for all mankind,

"EVEN AS MANY AS YOUR GOD SHALL CALL"

Everywhere the Scriptures remind us that no man taketh this honor to himself – the honor of being a member of the Body of Christ, the honor of being a member of the Royal Priesthood, etc. Only those called of God, drawn by the Father, can now come unto the Son and receive all of these blessings. This remains true to this day. The pity is that even some of those who have received and accepted the call are not sufficiently awake to rightly receive it. Our lesson assures us that this is but a small portion of the population. With many other words St. Peter exhorted and testified, saying, "Save yourself from this untoward generation." How successful was this message which was backed by the holy Spirit may be readily seen from the statement that three thousand gladly received the message and were baptized and continued steadfast in this teaching, and in fellowship and prayers.

"SAVE YOURSELF FROM THIS GENERATION"

Again we are in a Harvest Time. The Harvest Time of this Gospel Age is now in progress, as then was the Harvest of the Jewish Age. Now, as then, there are tests and stones of stumbling, purposely permitted of the Father for our proving, testing, development. Not the Head of the Body is now to be crucified, but the members – especially the feet of the Body of Christ, yet upon the earth. The great Adversary has blinded in a most marvelous manner some, of whom better things might have been expected. Our Lord's words are proving true – that his message would cause a measure of strife, which would thus reveal, manifest, those who are of a wrong spirit, but indirectly bring blessings to the faithful, who are willing to suffer with him and to lay down their lives for the brethren. The persecutors number amongst them some of the great and noble and religiously prominent of the world. What is our attitude? Are we sympathizing with this condition of things, or are we standing loyally, firmly for the Truth, the Lord?

As it was then, in the Lord's providence, that he drew the attention of those in a wrong attitude to the true conditions of things, that they might recover themselves from the snare of the Adversary, so he is now doing here. He is willing and able to expose the wrong doing, and to call the attention of the honest-hearted to the true situation. It then remains with themselves, as free agents, either to continue to endorse the wrong, or to stand out distinctly for the right. The Scriptures clearly indicate that the present generation is an untoward one – one that is unfavorable to righteousness. The Scriptures give delineations of the selfish spirit of our day, the loveless spirit, with its anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife, backbiting and slandering tendencies, and they tell us to what these will ultimately lead – to the great time of trouble, with which this Age will end.

What should we do? The Apostle Peter's words are appropriate: "Save yourselves." Do not wait to try to save Christendom. Let each one of us get his own heart right with God. It is an individual matter – who will stand and who will fall. According to the Scriptures and according to Israel as a type, the many will fall to the few who will remain standing. To save ourselves, we must take prompt, energetic action. Our repentance must be full. Our turning from the wrong ways must be positive. The promises are unto you and to your children, and to many afar off.

THE EARLY CHURCH – R. 2930

ACTS 2:37-47

"The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

THE MEAGER outlines of the preaching on the day of Pentecost, afforded us by the extracts from Peter's discourse, indicate simplicity, wisdom and courage, such as we should expect in those who were guided by the holy spirit. The Apostle first took advantage of the charge of some that the speakers were intoxicated. He showed the unreasonableness of the proposition on the surface and then explained the true meaning of the phenomena, referring his readers directly to Joel's prophecy, "And upon the servants and the handmaids in those days I will pour out my spirit." – Joel 2:29.

It may be well to note in passing that Joel's prophecy is a double one, and that, probably for the very purpose of hiding the truth until due, it states matters in their reverse order; telling first about the general blessing of the Millennial age "***afterward***," and telling subsequently about the blessing of the Gospel age, which is confined exclusively to God's servants and handmaidens – "***in those days***" – during the Gospel age, prior to the general outpouring of the spirit which will follow the establishment of the Kingdom.

Having gotten the attention of his hearers, many of whom were believers in the prophets – and "waiting for the consolation of Israel," which they promised – the Apostle proceeded to preach Christ unto them. He did not becloud his subject and confuse his hearers by saying: You have heard of great philosophers and great teachers amongst the Gentiles, and as Jews we have had some great prophets ourselves, one of whom was Jesus; but he came directly to the point he wished to impress, and declared to them that Jesus, the despised Nazarene, of whom, doubtless, the majority had heard something, probably derogatory, was indeed the Messiah; that though he had died he had arisen; and having arisen and ascended on high he had shed forth his power upon these speakers, who were now his representatives and mouthpieces in the world, to declare his mercy. Neither fear of rulers nor shame in confessing the crucified one to be his Master is the least apparent in the Apostle's language. He fully identified himself with the crucified one, and as plainly declared that the rulers had been wickedly and sinfully responsible for his death, in that they had incited the Roman governor to its accomplishment. He pointed out that this was no mischance, but God's foreknown and prearranged plan – that it was necessary that Messiah should die as the Redeemer of the people, before he could deliver them fully. He pointed out that although it was necessary for Christ to die nevertheless a heavy responsibility, a curse, hung over that nation which had thus, in its wickedness of heart, rejected and crucified God's Son.

The word of truth, as always, was a savor of life unto life or death unto death. (2 Cor. 2:16.) To many the words were foolishness and had the death odor, and they passed on; but to those deeply interested ones who remained, the Apostle's explanation of matters was forceful, – especially as he backed this up by quotations from the prophets, showing that God had foreknown the death of Messiah, and had foretold his resurrection also, and this miraculous outpouring of his spirit, of which they all were witnesses. The record is that many of the hearers were pricked to the heart – conscience-smitten. They noted the aptness of the Apostle's quotations and their application, and the logic of his reasoning; and doubtless in all these things they remarked of the apostles what they had previously remarked of our Lord – that the teaching was not like that of the scribes and Pharisees, uncertain, indefinite, but with force, with authority, with distinctness, with conviction of its truth.

And after this same sort is all the preaching of God's true servants, done under the

influence of the holy spirit. It is illuminating and not confusing. Error is never clear; it is always confused and confusing. Clearness and simplicity, on the contrary, are marks of the truth. For various reasons the old, old story, which the Apostles here preached, is considerably neglected in our day by professed ministers of the Gospel of Christ. One reason is that those who attempt to teach realize their own confusion of thought, and need first to be taught of God through his Word, by his holy spirit, and through such channels as the holy spirit may use in granting illumination of mind and appreciation of the Word. Another reason is that the nominal churches have in great measure ceased to believe the old, old story, and have accepted instead an evolution theory. Only to a small minority of Christian people, therefore, is the true Gospel precious. The majority more and more have itching ears for something new – a new gospel of education, refinement and wealth. – 2 Tim. 4:3,4.

As the Apostle clinched one feature after another of his argument, and showed how completely Jesus had fulfilled the declaration of the prophets in respect to his life, his teachings, his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and the holy spirit now poured out upon his followers, conviction of the truth was forced upon the minds of many of the hearers, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" – is there any mercy for us, seeing we are members of this nation, whose rulers have thus despised God's grace, and crucified his Son?

This was exactly the condition of heart which Peter desired to awaken. He wisely realized that people must see the provision for their forgiveness and rescue before they will lay hold upon salvation. He would not begin by tendering mercy, but by showing the right, the truth, and the wrong. But now that his hearers were in the right condition of heart the Apostle did not seek to terrify them, but promptly told them of God's mercy and love, assuring them that they were still his favored people, and that if they would come to the repentant condition of heart they would be accepted of the Lord, even as the other believers were already accepted; and that they, too, would have the blessing of the holy spirit and its gifts. There is a pattern in this preaching which all of the Lord's Royal Priesthood should take note of and practice as they have opportunity to dispense the good tidings. Instead of ranting, they should use logic, reason and Scriptural quotations; – and those convicted, and seeking to know the way, should not be terrorized, but should be promptly assisted and guided in the Lord's way, and assured of his mercy.

The Apostle was fully justified in telling his hearers that the promises were still theirs as a people; for it was clearly declared by the Lord, through the prophet, that Christ should be cut off in the midst of the seventieth symbolical week of Israel's favor, leaving one-half of that seventieth week, viz., 3½ years, of special favor to Israelites individually, after their national favor had ceased. – Dan. 9:25-27; Matt. 23:37,38.

Specifically, Peter's answer was that his conscience-stricken hearers should individually repent and be baptized. He did not make the mistake that some are inclined to make, when they suppose that sorrow for a wrong is repentance. Peter perceived that they already were sorry, "perplexed in their hearts." Sorrow is not repentance, but, as the Apostle explains, "Godly sorrow leadeth to repentance." (2 Cor. 7:9,10.) Repentance would be the proper fruitage or result of a proper sorrow. Repentance would mean a full retraction of all share in the great national sin of Israel, the rejection and crucifixion of Messiah. It would mean, therefore, an acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, and the confession of him as such. And this, in turn, would mean that confessing him to be the Son of God they would become fully submissive to his teachings, become his disciples. Repentance, therefore, rightly understood, meant a great deal, and it means no less today than then. Whoever today refuses to acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, the sent of God – whoever refuses to obey his teachings, to follow him – is unrepentant; no

matter how fully he may believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the sent of God, the Redeemer; and, even though he sorrow at the record of the sufferings of Christ, he has not come to the point of repentance until he has renounced the sins for which Christ suffered, and become a follower of his teachings. Only such as are thus repentant have part or lot in the household of faith. God's proposition is not to save people in their sins, but to save them from their sins; and during this Gospel age the first condition of acceptance, and even a reckoned salvation, is that the sinner shall renounce his sin and accept the Lord and the righteousness and harmony with God for which he stands as representative. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." – 1 John 5:12.

The persons whom the Apostle addressed were all Jews, and hence he said, "Be baptized ***for the remission of your sins***." Baptism is not God's appointed channel for the remission of sins; for, as the Apostle declares, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) However, the Jewish nation, under God's arrangement through Moses, was accepted of him as a whole, as a nation, and sin-offerings had been made for them all as a nation, and had been accepted, and a covenant had been made called the Law Covenant. Those whom the Apostles addressed, being under the Law Covenant, were under all these favorable conditions, under the blood of the typical sacrifices, typically justified and reconciled; and to them, consequently, God's promises pertained, as they did not pertain to the Gentiles, who had not come under such typical reconciliation through typical sacrifices. The sin which the Apostle wished his hearers to emblematically wash away in baptism was not, therefore, original sin, but was a sin against their Law Covenant, – including their national sin in the rejection of the Messiah. With these purged away, with the symbolical washing, they would be back to the standpoint of true Israelites, "Israelites indeed;" and as such they would have every right and privilege belonging to the Israelites, but belonging to members of no other nation. The Apostle Paul explains this relationship (Rom. 11), saying that the Israelites were the natural branches in the olive root of the Abrahamic promise. As branches already in that root they would not need to be grafted in, as do we who by nature are Gentiles. They were already in relationship to God, and all that they needed to do was to repent of their sins and figuratively wash them away, when they would be fully acceptable branches in the olive tree, which would not be broken off, but, on the contrary, would receive now a special share in the Pentecostal blessing. Subsequently, when exhorting Gentile converts to baptism, the Apostle Paul explained most clearly its difference from this baptism of Jews for the remission of sins. (Acts 19:1-6.) He shows that our baptism signifies or emblemizes our introduction into the body of Christ, as wild olive branches grafted into the approved stock, to be partakers of the richness of the promises through the root. (Rom. 6:3-5.) We should, however, remark that the Jew no longer holds this same peculiar relationship; so that if the Apostle were addressing Jews today we believe he would address them exactly as he would address Gentiles on this point of seeking union with Christ. Our reasons for so thinking are: That as the ***national*** favor to Israel ended with the death of Christ, in the midst of their "week" of favor, so the ***individual*** favor to the Jew above the Gentile ceased with the breaking off of the natural olive branches during the remaining thirty-three years of their "harvest," which ended with the destruction of their polity, A.D. 70. A natural branch once broken off could be reunited only by engrafting – in no way differently from a wild-olive branch. Consequently, any Jew, seeking to come into Christ since the day of wrath upon his nation, could come in only under the same terms and conditions as a Gentile.

The Apostle would have his hearers understand that the rejection of Christ and his crucifixion did not end the mercy of God toward them. These matters were merely steps in the divine plan for the execution of divine mercy; – the promises were still

theirs, yea, they would be for their children, and ultimately for all mankind, however far they might be from God at that time. But he intimates distinctly that a divine election is connected with the matter, and that only those called of God could at present be expected to hear and to respond. And this we see about us today, and as we look back through the past. As Abraham sent his servant, and invited Rebekah to be the bride of his son, Isaac, so the Heavenly Father has sent his servant, the holy spirit, during this Gospel age, to call the antitype of Rebekah, the Church, to be the bride of Christ, – joint-heir with his Son. As not all the women of the world were called to be the bride of Isaac, so at present not all mankind are called to be the Bride of Christ. Those invited to this joint-heirship must first be related to God, even as the one invited to be Isaac's bride was a relative of Abraham. Hence the step preparatory to this call to joint-heirship with Christ is justification through faith. The Apostle's hearers, being members of the typically justified nation, needed only to accept Christ, as the antitype of Moses, and to recognize spiritual Israel as the antitype of natural Israel, in order to be fully in relationship to the Lord's call.

Evidently the Lord was guiding in respect to every feature of the establishment of the Church, and it was on this account that so large a number as three thousand persons were prepared to accept the message, – to accept Jesus as their Redeemer and King, and to avow themselves his followers, his disciples. It is not necessary that we should suppose that they were all baptized in the one day, nor are we, indeed, certain that they all avowed their allegiance to Messiah in the same day; but that as a result of that one day's preaching about three thousand were added to the Church. These were not added to a denomination, a party, a sect, but were additions to the one Church, the body of Christ, – members added to the one head of the Church. We do not read that their names were enrolled as members of the Church, nor that they took certain vows, nor that they assented to certain confessions of faith. He who accepts Christ as his Redeemer and as his instructor, who pledges himself to obedience to him, and to walk in his footsteps, has taken the only obligation which the Scriptures define as marking those who are probationary members of the true Church. And it is still proper to make an outward acknowledgment or sign of this acceptance of Christ by a symbolical baptism. The real baptism, the real consecration of the heart, or will, its burial into Christ, takes place first; the outward or symbolical representation of this in water is the good confession by which the individual shows, in God's appointed way, to his fellows or to whoever may witness, that he has died to the world and become alive toward God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That the new converts were "Israelites indeed" was demonstrated by the fact that they did not speedily fall away and become cold. On the contrary, we are informed that they continued stedfast, recognizing the teachings of the apostles – that God specially used them as his representatives and mouthpieces for the instruction of his Church. They thus continued in fellowship with the household of faith, and this would imply meeting with them every first-day of the week to celebrate the Lord's resurrection, to unite their prayers at the throne of grace, and to build one another up in the most holy faith. Breaking the spiritual bread on these occasions, they also united in a common meal, in remembrance of the Lord's first meeting with them and making himself known after his resurrection in the blessing and breaking of bread. (Luke 24:35.) This has no reference to the Memorial Supper, which was celebrated yearly, and not with bread alone, but also with the cup, of equal importance.

"Fear came upon every soul" – reverence – an appreciation, to some extent at least, of the wonderful relationship to God into which they had been introduced, and of the wonderful power of God working in their midst, and especially manifested through the miracles and signs which the apostles were thus

permitted to perform for the establishment of the faith of the justified.

It has been assumed by some that communism as that term is applied today, was practised in the early Church; and it is the claim of some that it should never have been discontinued, but should always obtain amongst the Lord's people. We answer, first, that the early Church did not practise what is now known as communism; second, that something akin to what the early Church did practise (but modified) still is the rule amongst the Lord's saints; third, the extreme view (and practice) of the early Church was apparently not intended to remain, was never enjoined by the Lord nor the apostles, and serves rather as an evidence against the feasibility of the doctrines of communism under present conditions.

So far as the record shows there was no compulsory division of wealth, such as communism proposes. On the contrary, everything was voluntary; and everything of the same kind is just as free, just as voluntary, and just as proper, now as then, – no more so, no less so. Some of those who owned farms and personal property sold them and brought the money and placed it at the Apostles' feet – gave it into their charge. Some may have given all that they had in this manner, but it is not so stated. On the contrary, various things give the inference that Barnabas, who sold the field and gave the money, may still have retained other properties, which no doubt, he would have been willing to have disposed of later, and to have made similar use of the money as it might be needed. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira did not consist in their not putting all of their property into the common treasury, but in their deceitfulness in the matter; – in their pretending to give the entire proceeds of one property when they did not do so. Some Scriptures clearly intimate that some of the Lord's people at that time had private possessions aside from those which were put into the common fund. (See Acts 12:12; 21:16.) It is possible, of course, that in the two instances cited the properties might have been given to the community and might have been returned when the community failed, and when the believers were scattered abroad. On the other hand, we think it reasonable to suppose that the selling of the possessions was merely to such an extent as was necessary to supply the wants of all – so that none of the Lord's people might lack while others had superfluity. This kind of brotherliness and common interest should still prevail amongst the Lord's people. Indeed, to a considerable extent it must prevail, or else we are none of his. We are not to forget, however, that the necessity for private provision of this kind today is less than it was eighteen centuries ago; for now there are many more opportunities for earning a livelihood, and many provisions for the aged, the sick and the infirm. The public provision for the poor today is probably quite superior to that which was accorded to the poorer brethren under consideration. The same spirit of charity finds ample opportunity today. On every side we see brethren and sisters having need, not of the meat that perisheth, but of the "meat in due season," the spiritual food, and having need also of the robe of justification. There is abundant opportunity for all to join in dispensing these blessings, worth so much more than temporal good things to those who have need of them.

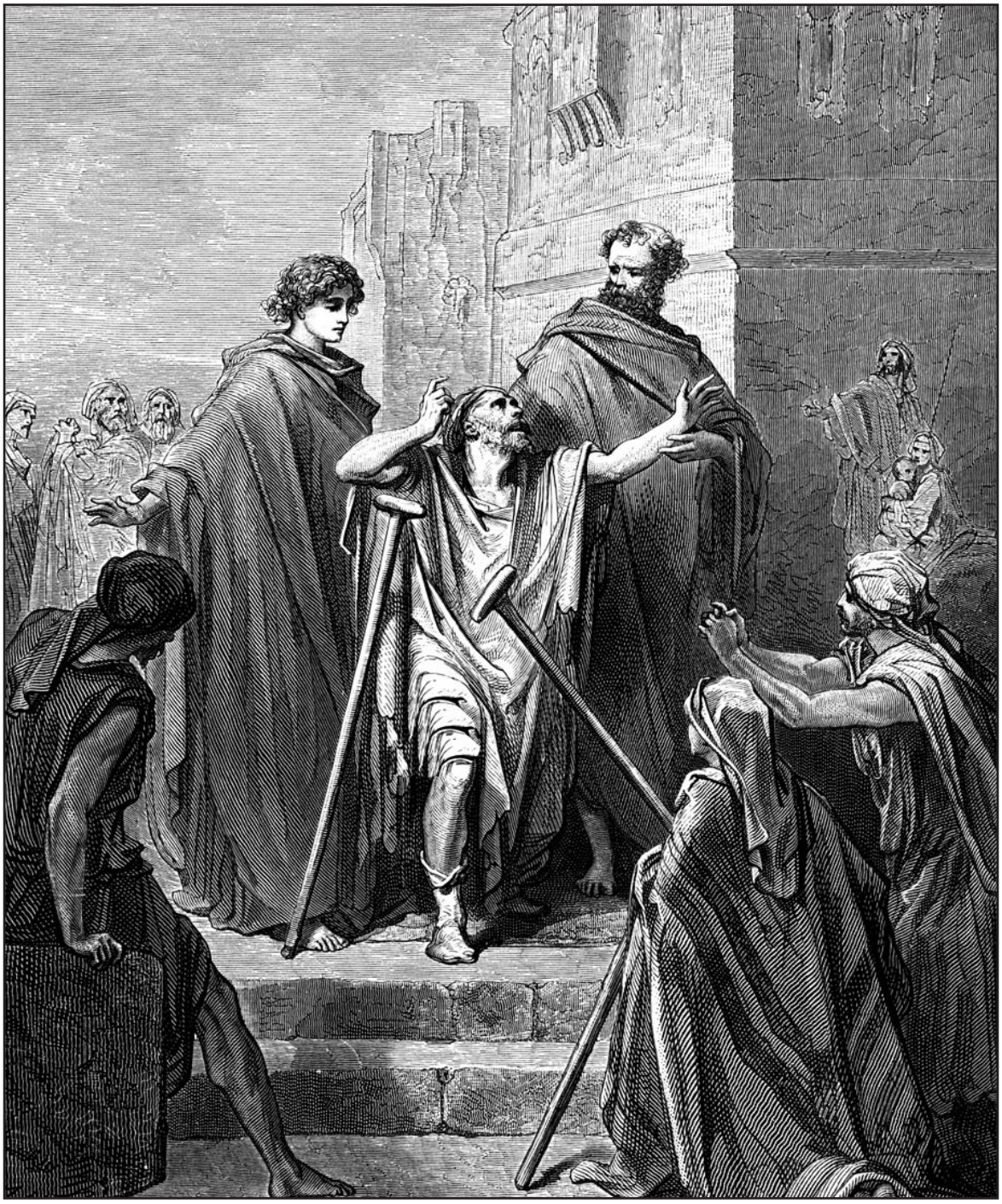
It is noteworthy that the apostles neither commanded nor advised communism; nor do their writings intimate that it prevailed in the early Church. As showing that there were both rich and poor in the assemblies of the primitive Church, note the Apostle Paul's words to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ***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 eternal life." (1 Tim. 6:17.) The same Apostle reproves some of the wealthy brethren for improper displays in connection with the Memorial Supper, saying, "Have ye not

houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not [wealth]?" (1 Cor. 11:22.) The Apostle John intimates differences in financial condition when he asks, How could he who loves God shut up the bowels of compassion against a brother, who lacks life's necessities. (1 John 3:17.) The Apostle James says, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart, and be ye warmed and fed, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" – James 2:15,16.

Indeed, in our judgment, the necessary lessons of life could not be so well learned, either by the rich or the poor, if community of goods were either the law or the rule amongst Christians. There can be no question, however, respecting the propriety of ***community of provision*** for those who are in want, in distress. It is in harmony with this thought that the Apostle advises each to lay by him on the first day of the week, according as God hath prospered him, a share of his income, – for good service to the Lord and to the brethren, in temporal and spiritual things. (1 Cor. 16:2.) No doubt, after the Millennial Kingdom shall have brought the willing and obedient of mankind to perfection, there will be some kind of communism such as we may presume obtains amongst the angels. Even then it will be a communism which will recognize some head or authority; for amongst the angels, we are informed, there are principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim, and God over all.

The early Church, full of love for the Lord and for each other, is a beautiful and in many respects an ideal picture, in which we can rejoice: no wonder it is recorded that they had joy, gladness, in their hearts, and in their thanksgiving to God, and that the people in general, their neighbors, were pleased with them and rejoiced in their loving spirit. How delightful it would be if all the Lord's people in the world today could be thus in harmony with each other and appreciated by their friends and neighbors. Indeed, we must suppose that the Lord specially shielded the infant Church for a short season, until it should become somewhat established in knowledge and in faith, else the Great Adversary would have raised up opposition and persecution more quickly than he did. Even as it was, it was but a little time until the persecution arose, and with it the testing of those who had espoused the cause of Jesus. Then came the great scattering under persecution, so that those who had learned the way of the Lord learned additionally patience and obedience; – some of them even unto death, and others being scattered abroad became preachers of the gospel of Jesus and their newly-found hopes in him.

The Lord "added to the Church daily such as should be saved," says our Golden Text; or, as the Revised Version renders it, "such as were being saved." As the same Apostle Peter declares, the salvation promised us is still future, – we are waiting for it; it is "to be ***brought unto us*** at the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus," at his second advent. (1 Pet. 1:13.) But meantime there is a beginning of this salvation in the present life. Even now we are, as the Apostle declares, "saved by hope." (Rom. 8:24.) The salvation is not merely of hope, either, but it begins to take hold upon us, mentally, morally and physically – the regenerating work begins; the new mind, the new will, is the start, and from that proceeds true obedience to the Lord's Word, progress in knowledge and progress in grace, and all the progress of the new creature. It often, indeed, means the sacrifice of the earthly interests of the natural man, but it means the development of the new creature. It means the progress of the work of salvation in the heart, which alone God recognizes; and the new creature thus making progress is ultimately to be perfected in salvation by a share in the "first resurrection."



St. John and St. Peter at The Beautiful Gate by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.
Acts 3:11

SUCH AS I HAVE, GIVE I UNTO YOU – R. 2933

ACTS 3:1-10

"The Lord is my strength and my song; he is become my salvation." – Exodus 15:2

PROBABLY it was not long after the day of Pentecost that the events of this lesson transpired. Our last lesson notes the fact that the believers, filled with their new joy, went frequently to the Temple for prayer and thanksgiving. This lesson shows us Peter and John attending the Temple service at the hour of prayer, three o'clock in the afternoon. These two had been with the Lord and with each other for now several years. Both had been disciples of John the Baptist, and previously they two had been together in the fishing business. They were also specially favored amongst the twelve, being with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the inner circle in the Garden of Gethsemane, etc. Although Peter was probably the eldest of the disciples, and John probably the youngest, and although their dispositions were quite different in many respects, apparently there was a strong element of harmony between them – they both loved the Lord very intensely, and they were both of ardent temperament. It was natural, therefore, that these two should be considerably in each other's company because of special compatibility. While it is well for the stronger brethren to pray with and company with the weaker sometimes, for the assistance of the latter, it is well also that kindred spirits should come together in communion with each other and with the Lord, as in this case.

As the apostles evidently went frequently to the Temple, and probably often by the same route, through the "Beautiful Gate," it is more than likely that the lame beggar, who had long been accustomed to that locality, in seeking alms, had seen them almost daily. Indeed, it would not be surprising if a knowledge of the Pentecostal wonders which had converted several thousand, and been "noised abroad," had reached the poor beggar, as well as many others of the religious class, who assembled almost daily at the Temple. Quite evidently therefore, the beggar knew Peter and John in advance of his healing. If so, it would to some extent account for his readiness of faith, by which, accepting the Apostle's word and hand, he was healed.

Why the Apostle Peter on this particular occasion was led to bestow a blessing upon this man we may never know, for it is probable that in that time, when there were no hospitals for the lame and blind, etc., the Apostles frequently passed by others as badly crippled and distressed as this one, without proffering aid. It would seem, however, that the man was an "Israelite indeed" – from the way in which he received the Lord's blessing. Otherwise, instead of having a heart overflowing with gratitude and thankfulness, he before would have been in an attitude of discontent, repining at his lot and complaining of divine providence; and in such a frame of mind his attitude after his healing would have been one of complacent satisfaction rather than of gratitude. He would have felt that he had received no more than his due. The connections, therefore, seem to indicate that the Lord's providence directed the apostles to him specially, on this account. And so it is with those of the Lord's people today who are in a right attitude of heart. They will, whatever their condition, find much to be thankful for, and can trace the Lord's providence and grace in life's affairs, notwithstanding its trials and difficulties. Such people are the objects of God's care, and have the assurance that all things are working together for their good. The Lord's providence may not always bring them physical health and strength, but it will surely bring to such the highest blessings which it brought to the poor cripple of this lesson – a knowledge of the Lord and a share of his ***spiritual*** favors.

At that time, when there was no provision

for the indigent and helpless, alms-begging and almsgiving were entirely proper. It is creditable to the civilization of our day and land, however, that the helpless are provided for at public expense – all property paying a poor tax or alms tax. It strikes us as being as much wrong to encourage public begging now, as it was right to respond to it at the time mentioned. If the friends of the indigent cannot amply provide for them the public can, and should, and generally does; and it would be a false pride which would ignore these ample provisions and not blush to seek others.

The Apostle said, "Silver and gold have I none." We can scarcely suppose that he intended this statement to be taken literally, for in the preceding verses we have the record that considerable property was sold, and the proceeds laid at the Apostles' feet – put at their disposal. But this evidently the apostles considered as belonging to the Lord and not to themselves – as trust funds. We assume, therefore, that the Apostle meant, Silver and gold we have none to give you, but we have something better to give you, something which God intended we should dispense. And undoubtedly what the Apostles gave was more valuable than money to the poor cripple.

So it is today; we are unable to respond as liberally as we would like to the requests which sometimes come to us for financial aid. The means which the Lord has put into our hands we understand him to intend us to transform in the main into spiritual food and clothing and strength and help, for the sin-sick and lame and for the error-blinded; and accordingly we are sometimes compelled to say, silver and gold we have little to give; but of the spiritual blessings we are willing to give liberally – without money and without price.

Our Lord's words were, "The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always." In seeking to be helpful to brethren in the Church and to the unfortunate in the world it is well that all should cultivate a largeness of heart; and yet it is well also to remember that in the cases of many of the Lord's children adversity has evidently been of the Lord's intention, to bring to them blessings which they would not be prepared to receive in any other manner. We are to endeavor to be helpful to each other, while seeking not to conflict with the operations of divine providence, and the learning of important lessons by those whose welfare we seek. We should never forget the Apostle's inspired words. – 2 Thes. 3:10.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Undoubtedly every child of God has realized the truthfulness of this; God is ever a bountiful giver, and his people, in proportion as they cultivate this quality, generosity, are therefore cultivating a grand, God-like quality. "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again [no reward]; and ye shall be children of the Highest." (Luke 6:35.) If we cannot always give much money, or if we cannot give as much as we would like to give, to those who are in need, we may always, like Peter, give something. We cannot, like him give health and strength miraculously, since we are not endued with those apostolic powers; but we can give a word of encouragement, a kindly look, a helping hand over difficulties; and these will often be more valuable than money, and sometimes more appreciated. Even an "enemy" should be fed, if hungry; but neither friend nor foe should be encouraged in indolence, nor in wastefulness.

We notice how distinctly Peter acknowledged the source of his power, and how he was not ashamed of any feature of divine truth. He boldly declared his miracle to be in the name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He did not say, in the name of Jesus, the greatest of all Jews, the highly esteemed friend of Joseph of Arimathaea, and of Nicodemus, one of your influential rulers; but, ignoring all such human weaknesses, he plainly declared that it was Jesus the Nazarene, the despised one, whose power had healed. We find some of the Lord's people today far less courageous than Peter; inclined rather to feel ashamed of the truth and ashamed of the agencies

God has used in its dissemination; – for fear that these would be a reflection against it. We should rather follow the Apostle's course, and be very courageous and ready to publicly affirm whatever we find possessing ***divine sanction***. Whatever agencies God may make use of in connection with his service we may be sure that he has some purpose, some object in view, and that his purposes will best be accomplished by plain, candid, truthful statements, like Peter's.

The description of standing, leaping and walking, may well represent the first efforts of one who had been born lame, and who consequently had never learned how to walk. However, the strength was in his limbs, and abundantly testified to the miracle wrought. The poor man was not ashamed of the agents whom God had used in his restoration. He shouted praise to God, and held on to his two benefactors, advertising them to the people, and thus advertising also the Gospel message, which they had to give, which undoubtedly was the very purpose the Lord intended. Here, too, is a lesson for us, not to be ashamed of those whom the Lord may use in connection with our spiritual healing – much more valuable, much more to be appreciated and acknowledged before God and men, than any temporal blessing. Indeed, the natural sight, natural hearing, natural walking, and natural enjoyment of every kind, are insignificant in comparison with the spiritual enlightenment and hearing and strength to walk in a spiritual way, as the spiritual joys are higher than the natural.

Peter was not self-seeking; he was alert to use every opportunity, every opening, that might come to himself, to the glory of the Lord and of his cause. And so when the multitude gathered together he used the miracle of healing as his text – as a demonstration of the power of the risen Jesus, operating through him; and he straightway declared to the people that this was the same Jesus whom their rulers had crucified some two months previously. He distinctly disowned that either he or John had any power of themselves to perform such a miracle; he did not say, either, that the healing was by a natural law operated by the man's faith; nor did he say that the healing was by "Science"; nor did he deny the facts, and claim that the man's impotence was merely a wrong thought, the correction of which had given relief. He told the truth, – that the man had been ill but was now made sound by the power of Jesus. Nor did he spare his hearers, but pressed home the truth of the responsibility of their nation for the crucifixion of one who not only was innocent and just, but who was the sent of God, the Messiah, the Prince of Life.

Here is another lesson for us. When we obtain the attention of men it is not to be frittered away, either in the discussion of unprofitable topics or in personal boastfulness; but is to be turned directly to the Lord's glory, to the preaching of the good tidings of redemption through the precious blood, that it may be known that all blessing of every kind comes through the merit of that sacrifice, and from our risen glorified Lord.

Our Golden Text surely represents the heart-sentiments of every member of the household of faith. The Lord is our strength; we lean not upon human might, – neither of our own or of other men. We hold the Head, from whom not only come the laws which govern us, but from whom come the strength, the direction, the protection, the care, which we need and which we enjoy. The Lord is become our salvation; he has saved us from the condemnation of sin through faith in the blood; he has rescued us from the love of sin. He has not only revived us, but strengthened us, and enabled us to walk in the narrow way, and to do so with joy and gladness and leaping. He is our salvation already – the salvation that is to be brought unto us, and thus to be complete in us, in the first resurrection, is already begun – for we are already passed from death unto life, and have the witness of this in the holy spirit.

THE LAME MAN HEALED – R. 2095

ACTS 3:1-16

"His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong."

THE stirring scenes of the Day of Pentecost were past, and this lesson introduces us to another notable discourse by the Apostle Peter, delivered probably not long after the day of Pentecost in company with the Apostle John. They had gone up to the temple at the hour of prayer. The clear intimation is that the apostles were praying men and that under the leading of the holy spirit they were guided in their ministrations of the truths connected with the new dispensation to the praying Jews, "devout" people, rather than to the godless. And so it is with the true gospel ever since. There is a message or a call to repentance which is applicable to every member of the human family; but the special message of the gospel is not to the unregenerate, but to the repentant, to the forgiven, to the reconciled. The Jews who assembled to worship the Lord at the temple were of course not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore were not justified by faith in his blood, but, under their Jewish covenant, the Law covenant, and by means of its typical sacrifices, they were up to this time typically justified as a people, and the grace of God was offered to them from that standpoint: they were not treated as strangers, aliens, foreigners, but as heirs of all the divine promises and blessings. And as a people the Jews continued to occupy this position for three and one-half years after our Lord's crucifixion and their national rejection. The Lord's favor according to promise continued with them individually until the full end of their "seventy weeks."*

*See Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 2, Chap. 3

(2,3) At that time hospitals, homes for incurables, blind asylums, poor houses, etc., apparently were not thought of, and were not instituted as we have them to-day in civilized lands; nor are they yet institutions in the East. Thus public alms-giving was probably considered a duty. We might here remark that, in our judgment, the course adopted by civilized nations of taxing all property and wealth for the reasonable and comfortable support of the incapables of society is eminently proper, and should be so completely carried out as to make public begging unnecessary.

(4-7) Peter's statement would indicate that he at least was a very poor man. "Silver and gold have I ***none***." Although he said, "Look on us," thus directing the cripple's attention to the Apostle John as well as to himself; yet, speaking of their financial condition, he does not say, "Silver and gold have we none." The fact is that there is good ground for supposing that the Apostle John had some property. We remember that our Lord with his dying words commended his mother to the care of John – possibly not merely because of his love for John and John's love for him, but also because John had some means wherewith to care for Mary. We remember furthermore that the account states that John took Mary "into his ***own*** home." – John 19:27.

The Apostle Peter seems to have exercised his individual gift in the healing of the cripple – "Such as I have give I thee:" nevertheless, it was not in his own name that the miracle was performed, but properly all credit was given to the Lord Jesus. This was evidently not a case of "prayer cure," for we have no record that the Apostles prayed over the man, nor that they anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. It was on the contrary an exercise of "the ***gift*** of healing," which was then with the Church for the purpose of introducing the apostles and the gospel which they preached.

Although fully conscious of the power of God operating through him to perform the miracle, Peter, apparently to assist the exercise of faith on the part of the cripple, stretched forth his hand and helped him to his feet; thus

illustrating the propriety of acting according to our faith, and permitting the influence of our faith to reach others in a natural and helpful manner.

(8-10) It is very evident that the poor cripple was not an impostor, for such a one instead of leaping about and enjoying his blessing, and praising God, would have regretted any circumstance which would deprive him of the opportunity for preying upon the sympathies of the people in order to avoid working for a living.

(11,12) We may reasonably suppose that the going of Peter at this particular time to the temple was of premeditation; we may suppose that he had been there frequently before; and that frequently before he as well as the others who attended at the temple had seen this same cripple. If Peter did not plan this particular visit and healing, we may reasonably suppose that the holy spirit planned and directed it for him. At all events the whole matter was very successful in that it drew the attention of the most devout, prayerful Jews to the gospel of Christ. The Apostle Peter was quick to use any and every opportunity to tell the good tidings. He began by modestly assuring the people that it was nothing wonderful in John and himself that had produced the miracle, and that the man was not cured either by their holiness or by their power, but by the power of the risen Christ Jesus. It is worthy of note that although in addressing the man Peter exercised his own faith only, yet now in speaking of the matter he associates John with himself as a sharer in whatever honor might belong to them as the instruments of God. How unselfish and how beautiful! What a lesson is in this verse for all who attempt any service for the King of kings. How necessary that we should realize not only our own insufficiency and nothingness in connection with the work of God, but how proper that self should sink entirely out of our thoughts and the glory all be given to Him whose right it is.

(13-15) The apostles' discourse as narrated was a short one, but well directed and right to the point. Beginning with a statement by which his hearers would understand him to be also a devout Israelite, he proceeded directly to the point – Christ, a crucified and risen Savior. Nor did he spare his hearers, but drove home the truth that the nation of Israel were the real crucifiers of God's dear Son, even when a Roman governor found no fault in him and desired to set him at liberty.

"Ye killed the Prince of life!" What a thought! They all realized themselves as death-condemned and dying creatures. They felt their need of life, eternal life, and had been praying for it and hoping that according to the divine promise it should come through Messiah, a Savior – a Life-giver, and now they were almost staggered by the Apostle's words, "Ye killed the Prince of Life" – the Life-giver! It is presumed that our Lord and the Apostles spoke in the Syriac language; and in the Syriac version of the New Testament the word "Life-giver" is used where in the English the word "Savior" occurs. The Apostle must have struck a very tender chord in the hopes and aspirations of these devout, prayerful Jews. We fancy them looking with incredulity, and saying within themselves, "Could it be possible that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, the Life-giver?"

(16) While they were yet wondering on the subject, the inspired Apostle quickly drew their attention to the evidences before them in the healing of the cripple, which attested the truth of his declaration that Jesus was no longer dead but risen. Here was just such a miracle as those which he a few months before had performed in their midst. It was another of Jesus' miracles; the apostles themselves performing it in his name and utterly disclaiming any ability to do such things themselves.

(17-21) Thus pointing them to the fact that Jesus was still a living, powerful, sympathetic and gracious Savior, he urged them to repent, assuring them that it was God's intention

to send great blessings through Jesus and to send Jesus himself back again a second time: assuring them also that at his second coming there would be an abundance of such manifestations as these which they had just witnessed, saying, –

"Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you whom the heavens must receive [retain] until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began."

Note that the Apostle began by expressing confidence in the "fathers" and in Israel's hope, built upon Jehovah's promise to them. Note also that after connecting those promises and hopes with Christ and his sacrifice, and linking it with the cure of the cripple, he points them down to the Millennial age as the grand consummation-time for all the blessings, all the good things, which God had promised by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began. Is it any wonder that such testimony – both reasonable and comprehensible – delivered to such devout Israelites, drawn together by a desire to worship the Lord, resulted as it did, in the conversion of about five thousand? As in the case of those noted in our last lesson, these were the "wheat" of that Jewish age, which the Lord was gathering out preparatory to the blinding of all the remainder of that people for the period of the Gospel age, at the close of which their blindness will be turned away. – Rom. 11:25,26.

ST. PETER'S SERMON ON RESTITUTION – R. 5838

ACTS 3

"Times of Refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the Heaven must receive until the Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began."
Acts 3:19-21

THE Apostles at Pentecost, in receiving the Holy Spirit, received not a spirit of fear, but a spirit of courage and of a sound mind. They had been commissioned by their Redeemer to preach the Gospel Message which was to gather from the Jews and from every nation a consecrated class of people to become the spirit-begotten sons of God and eventually to be the Bride, the Lamb's Wife and Joint-heir in His Kingdom.

Full of this courage, St. Peter and St. John, the leaders amongst the Apostles, went up to the Temple to pray – not because they any longer thought the Temple the proper place where prayer should be offered to God, but because they knew that it would be a good place to meet the people. Probably they expected that the Lord would there bring them in contact with the most devout Jews so as to give them an opportunity of testifying the good tidings to these.

The opportunity was soon found. They beheld a poor, lame beggar and perceived him to be a man of faith and trust in God. Looking upon him, St. Peter said, "Look on us"; and he looked, expecting to get money. But St. Peter continued, "Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." (Verse 6.) The lame man, astonished at such an offer of blessing, made an effort to obey the command, because he had faith. As he struggled to obey, St. Peter took him by the hand and assisted him in the exercise of faith.

God's blessing attended. His feet and his ankle bones, long withered, became strong; and he went with the Apostles through the Temple, holding on to them and shouting his praises to God and his acknowledgment that God's mercy had come to him through these men.

A NOTABLE RESTITUTION SERMON

A concourse of the holy Jews immediately gathered about. Now came St. Peter's opportunity for a great sermon – a witness to the Lord. He was not filled with pride and boastfulness, saying, "You may well look at us, for we are especially favored of God. None of your Scribes or Pharisees could have healed this man as we have done"; etc. St. Peter did nothing of this kind. In meekness and humility he said, Why should you look at us as though we had done anything of ourselves, or that any special holiness of ours had accomplished this miracle? We are merely the instruments of God, and this is a manifestation of God's mercy through Jesus. This miracle is done in Jesus' name – in the name of the Redeemer who has died for the sins of the world.

St. Peter proceeded to tell his hearers that the nation had wickedly crucified the Savior, but he assured them also of God's mercy, and declared that they might still repent and come back to God's favor, but only by renouncing their relationship with those who had done this evil deed and by taking their stand with and for the Lord. Very briefly and comprehensively he stated the Divine Plan as a reason why his hearers should consecrate themselves to God. (Verses 13-26.) They should repent of sins personal, as well as national, and be fully converted, or turned around – to know the Lord, to obey Him, to be followers of Jesus whom they had crucified. The result of this would be the covering of their sins by the Lord, permitting them to be accepted through Jesus as children of God; and ultimately this would mean that their sins would be blotted out completely with the glorious change of the First Resurrection – "sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spiritual body." – 1 Corinthians 15:43,44.

Following this blotting out of their sins and the giving to them the new bodies, free from sin and all its blemishes and imperfections, would come the glorious Times of Restitution of all things, which God had foretold through all the holy Prophets of the past. These would be Times, or years, of Refreshing, as well as of Restitution – a thousand years. Therein would be fulfilled all the promises of God to Abraham and to all the prophets and to Israel; namely, that in Messiah's glorious Kingdom the earth would be brought to Edenic conditions, "God's footstool would be made glorious." (Isaiah 60:13; 66:1.) The curse would be rolled away, and the blessing of the Lord rolled on to humanity instead.

Any prophet that had not mentioned these Restitution years could not have been a holy Prophet, St. Peter assures us; for Restitution is the Message of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. The Master Himself, the Redeemer of the world, declares: "Behold, I make all things new." "There shall be no more curse." Eventually there shall be no more sighing or crying or dying. All things will be made new by Messiah's Kingdom, although it will require the entire thousand years for the full accomplishment of all these glorious things.

THE GREAT ANTITYPICAL MOSES

St. Peter pointed out how Moses had foretold the calling out of a special Messianic class. (Deuteronomy 18:17-19.) Jesus is the Head of this class; and all now received into God's family by the begetting of the Holy Spirit are counted members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Moses was a type of this great Christ, and said to the fathers, "A [greater] Prophet [than I – an antitype] shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren." (Verse 22.) God raised up Jesus first, says the Apostle; and since Pentecost He has been raising up brethren of Jesus – the

Apostles first, then all the saintly characters of these past eighteen hundred years, called according to God's purpose to be the members of the Body of Christ, otherwise styled the Bride class. The full raising up of these will not be accomplished until the resurrection of the Church is completed.

When this great Antitype of Moses (Christ and the Church, His Body) shall have been lifted up, glorified, then will come the time for the blessing of the world, by the opening of the eyes of their understanding and through all the Restitution privileges of that time. During the Millennium, whoever will hear that great Prophet may come into a great blessing of perfection, of restitution – physically, mentally, morally – and thus to everlasting life. But whoever rejects that great Prophet, the glorified Messiah, will be destroyed from amongst the people – will meet the fate of the intelligently wicked. "All the wicked will God destroy." – Psalm 145:20.

The Apostle explains that the Lord's blessing was to begin with the Israelites, the natural children of Abraham. It did gather the "Israelites indeed." Then the Jewish nation was set aside from God's favor; and the door of opportunity was thrown open to the Gentiles, who have received the Lord's blessing of opportunity for eighteen hundred years. As soon as the foreordained number of the Elect are glorified, the present Age and its objects will have ended. Then the Restitution work will begin; and Israel according to the flesh will again take first rank in Divine favor, as explained in Romans 11:25-32.

A PROPHET, LIKE UNTO MOSES – R. 2858 *(modified)*

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." – Acts 3:22,23.

. . . Analyzing our text, we perceive that its expression, "like unto," has the sense of antitypical; hence the Prophet to be expected must be much greater every way than Moses, as an antitype is always far superior to its type. Moses was the Mediator of the Law Covenant, and thus stood between Israel and God, as we read in reference to the sealing and delivery of the Law Covenant: "The Lord our God made a covenant with you in Horeb. . . . The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of fire. ***I stood between God and you*** [a mediator, or go-between], at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." (Deut. 5:2-5.) From this we see that Moses, the ***typical*** prophet, was very great, very influential, had a very high office; and this would signify that the future Prophet whom God had in mind, and whose coming was foretold thirty-five hundred years ago by Moses himself, and further pointed forward to by the Apostle Peter in our text, must, as the antitype of Moses, be wonderfully great, wonderfully powerful, a still greater Mediator between God and men, a still mightier Law-giver whose word would be omnipotent, and violation of which would eventually mean destruction; – as it is written "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23.) Even at first glance every unprejudiced mind would say that Mr. Dowie, and every other man on earth, seems far too insignificant, far too small to fill the requirements. Not only too small for the antitype, but far inferior even to the type.
Turning to the record of Moses' words in the Old Testament, we find them in Deut. 18:15-

20, and here we see that the particular feature of Moses' work as a prophet and law-giver to Israel, which is here referred to as typical of a greater work to be accomplished by a greater Law-giver and Prophet, was the work which he performed for Israel as the Mediator of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai, in the district called Horeb, already referred to. At the time of the giving of the Law, Israel witnessed a wonderful manifestation of divine power. "All the people witnessed the thundering and the lightning, and the noise of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it they removed and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exod. 20:18,19.) In response to this their request God appointed Moses to be their Mediator or representative. Moses communed with the Lord in the mount, and received from him the Law, and came to the people and communicated the Law to them, and obtained their assent to the Covenant; and then, as a representative both of God and of Israel, Moses sealed the covenant; – ratified it by taking the blood of bulls and of goats and sprinkling first the book of the Law, or tables of stone on which the commandments were written, as representing Jehovah, and sprinkling, secondly, the people, as binding them. Thus the covenant between God and Israel was established at the hands of Moses, the mediator. It was at this time of the recognition of Moses as the Mediator of that Covenant that the Lord impliedly taught that the time would come when he would make a new and better Covenant, and establish it in the hands of a new and greater Mediator (the Christ); saying, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and I will put my words into his mouth." – Deut. 18:18.

The Apostle assures us of this; – that the Law-Covenant was a type, an illustration of a greater and more wonderful covenant, between God and his people in the future. He points out to us that as Moses was a type of Christ, the great Prophet, so the animal-blood he used in sealing that typical Law Covenant represented or typified the blood of Christ – the blood which seals, makes binding, ratifies, the New Covenant. Our Lord referred to the same thing in connection with his death, and the institution of the Memorial Supper, when he said, "This is the blood of the New Covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins." – Matt. 26:28.

We are sure that we are right in this application; because the Apostle, in Heb. 9:19,20, refers us back to the sealing of the Law Covenant, saying, "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." The entire tenor of the Apostle's argument shows us that he understood and taught that the antitype of this was to be found in Christ, in his sacrifice for sins, and not in Mr. Dowie, or any work that he might do. Continuing the same argument, into the next chapter (Heb. 10:16), the Apostle shows that the work of our Lord Jesus in offering up himself, as the ransom-price for mankind, was sealing the New Covenant, the antitypical covenant, which God had promised through Moses, and through all the prophets, saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord."

The Apostle evidently understood that the covenant which Moses, the prophet, instituted, ***typified*** the better covenant, which the greater Prophet, Christ, would institute in due time. Proceeding to compare these two prophets, the typical Moses and the antitypical Christ, the Apostle says, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy; . . . of how much severer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the [New] Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28,29.) The Apostle's argument evidently is that if God puts so much dignity upon

the typical prophet, Moses, that violation of his covenant would mean death, we might reasonably expect that a severer punishment would come to all those who shall be brought under the benefits of the New Covenant, and who shall then spurn them, not appreciating the fact that they were secured by the precious blood of Christ, the antitypical Prophet.

Continuing the same line of thought, viz., a comparison of the two mediators, and the two covenants, the Apostle draws to our attention the fact that Israel could not endure the terrible manifestations of divine power and justice at Mount Sinai, although they were only typical; and that as the typical Israelites needed and desired to be dealt with representatively instead of directly, through a mediator and not personally, – to be in the hands of the mediator, and not in the hands of God. So, says the Apostle, in respect to the New Covenant, and in respect to those who have apprehended that it was sealed with the blood of Christ, and that it is in operation now, and that we have the benefits of it conferred upon us. – If we should repudiate this New Covenant it would mean that we would thereby repudiate Christ (not Mr. Dowie), as our Mediator, and would fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with directly by him, and that without mercy. The Apostle clinches his argument, by saying, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." – Heb. 10:31.

It would be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, not because God is unjust, but because he is just; and because we are imperfect, and therefore could not hope to meet the requirements of the law of absolute justice. Divine justice would be to us as a consuming fire, destroying us, because we could not comply with its requirements. It is for this reason that God has appointed for us a covenant of mercy, of which Jesus is the great Prophet and Mediator, – not Dowie. God having appointed this one channel of mercy it is for us to accept it as he proffers it, or, rejecting it, to fall into the hands of Justice, and to meet our desserts, utter destruction. Those who reject Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant, will suffer more than those who rejected the typical mediator, Moses; for the latter lost merely the present life, but will have share in the restitution blessings of the next age; while all who intelligently and wilfully reject the Mediator of the New Covenant will die the Second Death. This is in full accord with the statement of our text, "The soul that will not hear [obey] that Prophet shall be destroyed from amongst the people."

Having seen from Moses' own words and their context that this use of the word "prophet" signifies teacher, law-giver, mediator, between the people and God, and that this declaration looked forward to the giving of a greater law at the hands of a greater mediator and prophet and law-giver, we now turn to the words of the Apostle, which precede our text. (Acts 3:19-21.) We find Peter discussing the second coming of Christ, and under the power of the holy spirit explaining to the people that with his second advent would come great blessing, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," but that the heavens would retain him until those blessed times of restitution should be due. He connects this argument with the words of our text, showing that Moses' prophecy of the great Prophet, of whom he was but a type, would have its fulfilment at the second advent of Jesus, in the power and great glory of his Kingdom – "whom the heavens must receive, until the times of restitution. . . . For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto [antitypical of] me." This leaves no room for question, at the bar of any reasonable mind, that the Prophet like unto Moses, announced for centuries as being the very center of the divine plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth, could not be fulfilled by Mr. Dowie, nor by any other ordinary or extraordinary man, but by him of whom Moses, in the Law, and the prophets did write – the Christ.

The more we will examine the subject the more we will find it to expand, and the more

we will appreciate the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan. The Prophet like unto Moses, the great Law-giver, the great King, the great Mediator, will be the foretold "Seed of Abraham," in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed – through the divine laws which he will enunciate, and the regulations he will enforce. And this Seed of Abraham, as we have already seen, as the Apostle has most clearly set forth, consists of our Lord Jesus, as the Head, the chief, and all of his faithful elect Church as members – as his body, "which seed is Christ. . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." – Gal. 3:16-29.

In this view of the matter our Lord Jesus was raised up eighteen centuries ago as the "Head" of this great Prophet. He was raised up amongst his brethren, "a first-born among many brethren." He is not ashamed to call us "brethren," although he is the sanctifier and we the sanctified; he is the head over these brethren; and as such he has been raised – how high? Let the Apostle answer: "Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named" (Eph. 1:20-23); and the promise to his faithful followers is that they shall be counted with him as his "Bride," or, under another figure, as his "body," – "members in particular of the body of Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2; 1 Cor. 12:27.) They also shall be raised, up, up, up. Already these are raised above the condition of the world, in that they have been favored of God, and called with a high calling, a heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. Already they have been raised up, in the sense of being transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Already they are reckonedly risen with Christ, and walking in newness of life. And these, the members of the body of Christ, have the promise that they shall be raised up still further in due time – that they shall "have part in the first resurrection," to glory, honor and immortality; that they shall be like Jesus, their Head and Lord, and see him as he is, and share his glory, far above angels, principalities, and powers, and every name. – Eph. 2:6; Rom. 2:7; Rev. 3:21.

Thus we see that the great work which God began in the person of our Lord Jesus, and in the sacrifice which he made for our sins and in his own exaltation in resurrection power, has not been lying idle since; but a work has been in progress in behalf of the world. Jesus personally has exercised the office of High Priest to and for the under priests, his "body," during this Gospel age, selecting, instructing, fitting and preparing them for the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the future in behalf of the world. And we can easily see also that this work of raising up the great Prophet (Head and body) from amongst mankind, to a higher nature, even to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) will soon be accomplished. Then what glory! What blessing, when this great Prophet, Priest and King shall exercise, in the name and spirit of Jehovah, the authority of earth, to bless mankind, to cause the social uplift which the whole world so greatly needs, but which can come from no other source; to restrain, and ultimately to completely overthrow, the powers of evil, of darkness, and of sin, and thus to purify and cleanse the world and bring in the glorious time promised, when there shall be no more sighing, no more crying, no more pain, no more death, – because the former things of sin, and its penalty, death, will have passed away! All who remain at that time, after that glorious reign shall have completed its work, will be in full harmony, mentally, morally and physically, in deed and in truth, with Jehovah God, and the righteous laws of his empire – all who would not obey the great Prophet, and thus come into accord, having been destroyed from amongst the people according to the divine declaration.

Hallelujah! What a Savior! What a wonderful and comprehensive plan is this, which our great Creator has mapped out, of which we are, first, the subjects, and afterward, by his grace, his active agents in bringing to the world of mankind. . . .

GREATER WORKS SHALL YE DO – R. 4313

ACTS 3:1-16

"His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know."
– Acts 3:16

OUR lesson tells of one of the prominent miracles granted of the Lord at the beginning of this age. Peter and John were God's instruments in effecting an instantaneous faith cure. A man deformed from birth and unable to walk was made whole. The only power exercised was the power of faith on the part of the apostles, for the man healed, so far as we know, had no knowledge of Jesus, nor that the apostles were his representatives. Nor should we understand the apostolic command, "Look upon us," to mean the exercise by them of any hypnotic influence. Quite to the contrary, the power by which they healed was the same by which their Master had performed healings during the three and a half years of his ministry. The testimony in a nutshell is, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk, and he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength." – Acts 3:7.

THE DESIRE FOR HEALING

Perhaps there was never a time in the world's history when humanity manifested more desire for physical healing than today. Nor can we blame the poor, groaning creation for desiring relief. It is with regret, however, that we note that our Lord's comment to the 5,000 whom he fed miraculously with bread and fish is still considerably applicable. He told them that they sought him because they had eaten of the free luncheon and not because of their love of the truths which he was preaching. He also told them to "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath the Father sealed." – John 6:27.

So today we could wish that the hungry and thirsty were for the real relief which God hath provided and which all of us need – relief from sin and death. In a word, we could wish that there were a greater appreciation of soul sickness from sin and that there is but the one Good Physician, who is able to heal this malady and through whose ministry we may be healed. Note the fact that some of the strong delusions are supported by their claim to relieve physical pain. This is the claim of Spiritism – that disease can be relieved through mediumistic powers, under another's control. It is the claim of the Mormons that they can heal diseases miraculously. This is the claim of Christian Science, Mind Cure, Faith Cure people, Divine Healers, etc. Some of these names are used merely as a cover and pretense, while by others they are used with full faith that they are of some supernatural origin. The attitude of the public seems to be Give us healing. Give us relief from our aches and pains. If it is of God, we are glad. If it is of the Adversary, as you claim, we still take it, even though we know it to be in opposition to the Divine will.

Such great inroads have been made in the churches of all denominations by these mind cures, hypnotic cures, that ministers of all denominations are perplexed what to do. The dominant idea with many of them is – our organization must be maintained at any cost. As a business man would purchase any kind of goods that would sell, so must the churches, they think, supply to the public whatever it demands; otherwise the congregation would diminish, the minister's salary would not be collected, and the whole denomination would fall to pieces. The ministers, therefore, feel that for self-preservation, and for the preservation of the organization they represent, they must meet the public demand, just as a theater manager feels that he must meet the public demand.

THE EMMANUEL MOVEMENT

At this opportune moment, when ministers are in perplexity and congregations are demanding physical healing, and particularly implying that they will not serve a God who will permit them to have afflictions and to be touched with a feeling of the infirmities of the race, the Emmanuel movement steps to the front. At one bound it has leaped into general favor, because it avoids much of the absurdity of Christian Science, which implies that there is no sickness, no pain, no death. The Emmanuel movement acknowledges the ills and seeks to relieve them and, in this respect, is certainly on advanced ground. Started in Boston, after more than a year's success, it is being laid before the ministers of all denominations. Books are published instructing them how they may establish these physical healings, instituted in connection with churches of all denominations. Special classes have been organized in various colleges for the purpose of instructing those studying for the ministry how to perform these cures. The matter has gone forward with remarkable speed. How great will be its proportions within a few years is difficult to say. We have no pleasure in merely fault-finding. Did we consider these various healings as innocent, not to say divine, as some suppose them to be, we would be either cooperating with them, or, at least, saying nothing against them, even as we decline to discuss the various schools of medicine, believing that each represents more or less skill helpful to humanity.

But in these various cures for physical ailments now being promoted throughout Christendom, we see a great and a serious danger. Seeing this, it is our duty to raise a general voice to those who have an ear to hear the message. Our protest is that these are none such miracles as were wrought by our Lord and his apostles. True, there is a measure of similarity, just as some of the electric arc lights of our day closely resemble the sunlight. To our understanding, many of those identified with the various schemes of mind healing, faith healing, Christian Science, Hypnotism, etc., are well-meaning, thoroughly conscientious; and thoroughly deluded. To our understanding their cures are not by divine power, but by that of the Adversary, whom the Lord is permitting to use these means of attracting the Lord's people and the world away from the spiritual things and their necessity; also from the spiritual healing. We are well aware that in thus writing we are putting ourselves on the unpopular side, yet our duty is to the Lord and to the Truth and to those who have ears to hear and who desire to hear the message of the Lord.

HYPNOTISM TINCTURES ALL DECEPTION

Do not misunderstand us. We do not dispute that cures are accomplished, nor that some of the proceedings and theories are legitimate enough. What we do claim is that the Truth and rationality connected with these systems are the sugar-coating which covers the poison. The poison connected with all of them is the poison of the Adversary, the power of the fallen angels exercised in its most subtle form, namely, mental suggestion – hypnotism. This rational sugar-coating consists in the extending of kindly sympathy to the bereaved: in the recognition of the fact that fear is one of the most potent causes of human trouble and that faith in the Lord, or in a devil, for that matter, has the effect of resting the mind, relieving the nervous tension, and thus facilitating the eradication of pain. The doctrine of "Peace, troubled soul!" is certainly a good and wise one, particularly when based upon a Scriptural faith in Jesus as our ever-present help in every hour of need and when it promotes loyalty and obedience to him. This spirit of restfulness and "peace with God," if built upon false doctrines and erroneous suggestions and hypnotic influences, but hinders the soul from a proper approach to the Life-Giver and opens the way for the attacks of the Adversary.

As Christian Science and Mind Cure pervert reason and thus destroy the power of

reasoning logically, so Hypnotism undermines the will, weakens it, and prepares the way for further intrusions from the fallen spirits. To our understanding, Christendom is thus permitting an undermining of faith and will power, and is preparing for the great day of trouble with which this age will in a few years close – a trouble which will result largely from the intrusion of the evil spirits into human affairs, through the entanglement of human wills, weakened by Hypnotism. We warn all to be on guard against these modern miracle-workers and we call attention to the fact that their operation is entirely different from anything recorded in the Scriptures.

THE CHURCH'S MIRACULOUS ESTABLISHMENT

There is a reason for the miracles wrought by our Lord and his disciples. They were for the establishment of the Church – as a testimony to the Lord. Without them Christianity would not have grown as rapidly as it did. These miracles ceased as the Church secured an established footing. The miraculous gifts of the spirit, healing, etc., were supplanted by the spiritual gifts, or fruitage of holy living. As the Apostle declares, Whether there be miraculous tongues, they shall cease, and so with all the other gifts, including healing. The physical healing was supplanted by the spiritual healing. Thus our Lord's words were fulfilled, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." What intelligent Christian who has experienced the opening of the eyes of his understanding will dispute the fact that he has received a far more valuable gift than that of the opening of his natural eyes? Who that is deaf, but has the ears of his understanding opened to spiritual matters, would not claim that he had a greater blessing than a restoration of physical healing? Who that has eaten of the Bread that came down from heaven and received spiritual strength, does not realize that his blessing is far beyond that enjoyed by those whom Jesus fed with the five barley loaves and the three small fishes? Who that has realized the healing of the soul does not realize that the healing of his heart affections is of much more value to him than the healing of any earthly disease? Who that was born in sin and shapen in iniquity and who has realized the forgiveness of his sins and has received grace whereby he may walk in the footsteps of Jesus, does not appreciate this as a greater miracle than the one recorded in our lesson? Ah! but some will say, "Let us have both the spiritual and the physical healing. Did not Jesus give both, and should not we expect both?"

We reply that Jesus did not give both, but merely the physical. Not until he had finished his sacrifice and had ascended up on high, there to appear in the presence of God for us, could any of us receive of the holy Spirit. And not until then could any understand the spiritual things, the deep things of God. It is for this reason that our Lord's sermons were generally limited to earthly things. He said, "If I have told you of earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12.) Again he said, "I have many things yet to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." (John 16:12,13.) The Apostle tells us that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. . . . But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." – 1 Cor. 2:14,10.

OUR LORD'S MOUTHPIECES

It is for this reason that we find some of the most helpful spiritual instructions in the writings of the apostles, without which we should not be able to get so large a measure of spiritual nutriment from our Lord's utterances, which were in parables and dark sayings, thus reserved for the future use of the saints.

Under the picture of the Church at Laodicea, the Lord pictures to us the last stage of the Gospel Church. He represents it as saying, "I am rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing." Nominal Christendom has been disposed to boast of its riches in scholarship and property and intelligence and influence, and its high moral standing. The one thing it has coveted is the healing power, and now it is grasping this, to its further injury, to the increase of its pride and boastfulness and to the bringing of itself still more fully under the powers of darkness.

Notice how different is the Lord's view of the Laodicean Church, from that which it entertains of itself. He says, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see." – Rev. 3:17,18.

It is for us to take the Lord's viewpoint, to see what constitutes the true riches, the true source of happiness and joy in the Lord. It is for us to have our eyes opened, and not to be deceived by our Great Adversary in this time. We remember our Lord's very words on this subject; his intimation that at his second advent many would boast of their work and power of healing, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matt. 7:22.) But our Lord said to such, I do not know you. I do not recognize you. You have no authority to make yourselves my disciples.

Let us remember, dear friends, that the Lord's blessings upon the apostles were not in the nature of preservation from sickness or calamity, but the reverse. We have records of several of the prominent brethren of the Church, but no records of any of them being miraculous healers. The healings which were done were performed for signs for those about. We have records of disasters permitted to come upon our Lord and upon the apostles and upon the Church of that time – hatred of the world, thwarting of their plans, cruel mockings, stripes, in perils of shipwreck, in perils among false brethren, hungering, thirsting, etc. If God manifested his favor thus to our Lord and the most influential members of his Church and their associates, what shall we choose for ourselves? If we allow the Lord to choose our portion for us, he doubtless will give us similar experiences in this time, and glory, honor and immortality by and by. If we attempt to choose our own way, the Adversary will try to delude us and we may be relieved of some physical pains or difficulties, which might have been for our eternal welfare. Let us choose the better part, pray for the spiritual things and labor for them, and accept, as respects our earthly affairs, whatsoever our Father sees best!

Peter and John before the Sanhedrin

So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:18-20

THE FIRST PERSECUTION – R. 2939

ACTS 4:1-12

"There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

THE COMMOTION caused by the healing of the cripple by James and John, and the gathering of the crowd of worshipers to whom they preached, brought upon the apostles a new difficulty. The priests, whose ministries were more or less interrupted by the disturbance, felt a grievance against those who thus attracted attention away from themselves and their services, and the officers of the Temple, whose duty it was to preserve order, were also disturbed. These, coming upon the preaching Apostle and the interested multitude, arrested the three who were the cause of such a commotion, that the matter might be enquired into. It was toward evening, and therefore too late to gather the members of the Sanhedrin Court. The three who had been witnessing for God and for Christ were put in ward, in the prison; not as felons, but for trial. It would have been possible for the imprisoned men to have viewed their situation from the standpoint of unbelief, and to have said to themselves and each other: God did not approve our work, and hence has permitted us to be thus arrested and imprisoned, and now we know not what the result will be on the morrow, for those who crucified our Lord may crucify us also.

Or they might, in unbelief, have reasoned still otherwise, and have said to each other: After all, what right have we to think that God has anything to do with these matters? We are like other men, and have merely found some new way in which natural law operates in the healing of the sick: God evidently is not concerned in this work; for if he were surely he would not have permitted us to come into these straits, while we were seeking to serve him and to declare the good tidings. But we may safely assume that the thoughts and words of the prisoners took a totally different direction. Full of faith, they no doubt said to themselves: We know not in what way the Lord may intend to use this, which seems to be a disadvantage to us, and an interruption to his work; doubtless however, he will use it in some manner to forward his cause and to reach more of his people with the truth.

As a matter of fact, the Lord evidently intended through this seeming calamity to bring to the apostles a still grander opportunity of testifying to the truth on the next day – of preaching to a class which they might never again have opportunity to reach – the priestly class, the ruling class, represented in the Sanhedrin, and those who would gather at its sessions. When the Sanhedrin Court opened the next morning, amongst its seventy members, representatives of the most influential classes in Jerusalem, were Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, his son, both of whom had about two months previously presided in the trial of the Master himself. Nevertheless, the apostles were evidently not at all dismayed by the dignity of the Court – the Lord evidently fulfilling to them his promise, "Ye shall be brought before kings and governors for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles; but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak." (Matt. 10:18-20.) That Peter, as spokesman for the three, was supernaturally assisted, is implied in the narrative. "He was filled with the holy spirit."

It is not amiss here to notice that the Jewish party which most particularly persecuted our Lord was the sect of the Pharisees, the holiness people of that time, basing their opposition upon our Lord's public declarations of their hypocrisies, – the Sadducees taking less interest in the persecution. But, on the contrary, in the Acts of the Apostles, the persecutions of the Church seem to have been largely at the hands of the Sadducees. The Sadducees should scarcely be considered a religious party, for they denied the resurrection of the dead, and

denied also the existence of spirit beings, and hence believed principally in a religion for the present life merely. The Sadducees were the policy-men of that time. They favored harmony with the Roman Empire, and might, indeed, be termed the politicians of the Jewish nation. History says that the high priest and his family, and those principally in influence, were Sadducees. It is evident, therefore, that the preaching of the ***resurrection*** of Jesus, and of some spiritual power by which he could work through the apostles to the healing of the man born lame, would be an aggravation to these Sadducees, because it was directly in conflict with their belief and teachings.

Indeed, it is worthy of notice, here and in subsequent lessons, that one of the main features of the Gospel which the apostles preached was the doctrine of the resurrection – that Christ had risen from the dead, and that through him in due time not only believers should be raised from the tomb, but ultimately all the world of mankind be released from death, – that each and all might have a full share in the judgment or trial for life everlasting, which had been secured by the ransom sacrifice of Christ. No wonder, then, that the Sadducees specially resented this new doctrine, which antagonized their views and to some extent supported their religious opponents, the Pharisees.

It may at first seem peculiar that a court trial should be held in respect to the healing of a cripple. However, the object of the trial evidently was, if possible, to condemn the apostles for having practiced necromancy, sorcery, the black art. For, according to the law, a witch or wizard or necromancer, a spirit medium, was to be put to death.

If Peter had been filled with fear he would not have spoken as he did to this Court, or if he had been filled with the spirit of egotism and boastfulness he would have spoken differently; – he would have spoken unwisely, rashly, no doubt. But filled as he was with the holy spirit, the spirit of meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, and guided in his words by this spirit, he made an address which is beautiful, both for its simplicity, its directness, and its meek-boldness. His opening sentence had in it, possibly, a gentle irony respecting a trial for a good deed; but, as on previous occasions, he immediately proceeded to disclaim for himself and his associate, John, any power, any authority, in connection with the matter, and declares that the miracle was performed in the name, by the authority, by the power, of Jesus of Nazareth. Once again, he is not ashamed to own that the one he acknowledges was contemptuously called the Nazarene; nor to say that he is a follower of the one who was crucified as a malefactor. While telling the plain truth, that this very Sanhedrin had caused the death of Jesus, he states the matter without bitterness or acrimony.

Peter allowed the fact that God raised up Jesus from the dead to stand as the proof that they had erred in their condemnation of him; and, without parleying the question, he proceeded to assure his hearers that this one, Jesus, whom they despised and rejected, had nevertheless been owned of God as the "chief corner stone" of the great Temple which God purposes to build. He thus referred their minds directly to a Messianic Psalm (118:22) familiar to them, pointing out its fulfillment in Christ, and declares, "Neither is ***the*** salvation in any other." This expression, "***the*** salvation," to his hearers would have the sense of, The salvation for which we Jews, as a nation, have been waiting and longing, – a national salvation, and an individual salvation in the Kingdom of God.

Let us mark well also the inspired utterance of the Apostle, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." This would be a difficult lesson for his hearers to receive. It would mean a total revolution of their theories, hopes, aims, plans and projects. It would mean that they had been wrong, utterly wrong, in all their expectations for some time. It would mean that they had,

as teachers, been misrepresenting the divine plan and misleading the people. The Apostle's course, however, was plain. It was proper that he should state the matter clearly, without peradventure, that his hearers might have a full testimony respecting the truth.

The Apostle's words are "a hard saying" today, also, in the nominal church. False doctrines have made it appear an unreasonable statement in the minds of Christian people generally. They say, This cannot be so, because if true, it would mean that the heathen are lost. If true, it would mean that our friends and neighbors and relatives who have never believed in the name of Jesus, who have never accepted him as their Savior, are lost; and by "lost" they would mean – gone into eternal torment. Thus does false doctrine becloud and contradict the truth. But how beautifully and how simply might the Apostle's words be received just as they are, if all could but realize that the whole world was already lost, already condemned, by one man's disobedience; already under sentence of death and passing into it. Peter's declaration is that only those who have accepted Jesus have yet come under the terms of the only salvation God has provided: and, since Jesus "tasted death for every man," it follows that in God's "due time" every man must come to an opportunity of hearing of the only name, and of accepting the one salvation. This opportunity, according to the Scriptures, will be during Messiah's reign in the Millennial age, when "the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth," and "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" by the glorified Christ and his glorified Church unitedly, the spiritual seed of Abraham. – Gal. 3:16,29; Jer. 31:34.

Blinded by the inconsistencies of doctrines received from the "dark ages," many of the Lord's professed people are today grappling with this question of who shall be saved, many or few, and fail to see that the greater part of God's plan of salvation is to come after the calling and perfecting of the "elect," the Church. Thinking that the present life ends all trial for every creature, many are convincing themselves that the Apostle erred, and that instead of one name only being given for salvation there are many names – including those of heathen divinities and teachers. They fail to see the ransom and its importance, as paving the way for teaching of any value or assistance. Hence they vainly hope that the ministries of Confucius and others will somehow or other save them, separate and apart from Christ, whom the Scriptures declare to be God's appointed Savior for the whole world, – and of whom Peter, under the plenary inspiration of the holy spirit, declares that his is the only name whereby salvation must be obtained, if obtained at all. These false hopes turn the eyes of many away, so that they cease to look for the God-ordained "Sun of righteousness," whose beams, we are promised, shall shortly enlighten and bless all. – Mal. 4:2.

Very evidently the testing for the saints in this end of the age is coming along this very line – belief or unbelief in the testimony which God has given us through his Son, and through his chosen apostles, – "the twelve." Those who are faithful to the Word of the Lord will come off conquerors; those who yield to human theory, miscalled wisdom, will fail, will stumble, will be separated from the true wheat, the entire remnant of which must shortly be gathered into the garner. We thank God that this stumbling and unbelief will not mean the Second Death to all who stumble, because very few today evidently have that sufficiency of light and opportunity essential to a sentence to the Second Death; – very few obtain their full trial. We are to judge ourselves closely, however, and build no false hopes for ourselves, if we are among the favored few who have tasted the good word of God and been made partakers of the holy spirit. We are to remember the Apostle's caution that such as have enjoyed these favors, if they should fall away, would be doing despite to God's grace, and would afterward find no place for repentance. – Heb. 10:29.

OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MEN – R. 5839

ACTS 4:1-31

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." – 1 Corinthians 16:13

ST. PETER and St. John, arrested for preaching Christ as the Healer of the lame man in the Temple, were called to answer before the Jewish High Court – the Sanhedrin, composed of seventy learned Jews. These sat in a circle, and had their prisoners before them. When we remember that the Apostles were illiterate fishermen, unaccustomed to public speaking and to contact with the great and learned, we may well be amazed at their courage and at the straight-forward presentation of the Gospel given there by St. Peter. It astonished the Sanhedrin, too. They wished to arraign the Apostles, not for the good deed of healing the lame man, but rather for their preaching of Jesus.

However, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, St. Peter wisely and properly drew attention to the fact that they were on trial really for the healing of the sick. Again he disowned any power on the part of himself and his companions. Admitting that they were merely ordinary men, he credited the miracle wholly to Jesus. What a lesson is here for all who would represent the Lord as His ambassadors! As St. Paul said, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus." – 2 Corinthians 4:5.

Under any circumstances, how courageous indeed were the Apostle's words: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole!" St. Peter was not only preaching that Jesus was not a deceiver but the real Messiah, whom the Jews had long expected, but, additionally, he was declaring that the Sanhedrin had murdered the Messiah. It was the truth; and it was necessary to utter the truth. To have evaded the point would have shown fear; and the Apostle would have failed to make a right and proper impression on the Sanhedrin and the auditors.

Some one might suggest that St. Peter did not use gentlemanly language – that he should not have made such a home-thrust at the Sanhedrin. Mr. Benson, in ***The North American Review***, gives a definition of the term gentleman which seems to fit this case. We quote:

"'How do you define a gentleman, then?" said the lawyer, leaning forward at a certain point of the conversation. 'The gentleman, it has been said, is a man who is never offensive unintentionally,' said the parson. Two of the guests murmured 'intentionally,' by way of correction; and the parson smiled. 'No,' he said, 'a gentleman is sometimes offensive when honor and reason demand it, but then he means to be. The man who is not a gentleman is often offensive when he does not mean to be.' 'But is he always a gentleman when he is intentionally offensive?' asked the lawyer. 'The gentleman is,' said the parson, with a smile."

In St. Peter's case it was not a time for quibbling. It was a time when a gentleman was in duty bound to use his opportunity, in no unkindly way, in placing the truth before his hearers. And how much St. Peter crowded into a few words, according to this record! He identified Jesus the Nazarene, the one who had been crucified, as the Messiah, the One whom God had approved, as was manifested in the raising of Him from the dead.

THE SANHEDRIN PERPLEXED

Next the Apostle quoted to them from the prophecy of David (Psalm 118:22), saying, "This is the Stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the Head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." If there was a force, a sting, in these

words to his hearers, it was because they were so seriously in the wrong. How fortunate it would have been for them if they had been humble-hearted, like those who heard St. Peter on the day of Pentecost! Then they also would have cried out in consternation, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" But, alas! education, honor of men, high station, often put the possessors of these at a disadvantage.

The Sanhedrin were rich, not only financially, intellectually and in honors of men, but also in education. To them forcefully belong the words of Jesus, "Woe unto you rich!" – you are at a disadvantage. Pride, honor of men, self-conceit, hinder many such from receiving the simple Message of the Gospel. Thus we perceive that there are compensations in the Divine arrangement, and that in some respects poverty is a blessing in disguise. Hence the assurance of the Word that not many rich, not many great, not many learned, not many noble would be among the chosen of the Lord or would receive positions in the Bride class and in the Heavenly Kingdom. – 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

Perceiving the boldness of St. Peter and St. John, and noting that they were unlearned and ignorant, the Sanhedrin marveled, and "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Ah, yes! of Jesus also some one had said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" – in any of our schools. (John 7:15.) They knew of His power with the people through the Spirit of the Lord and of His straight-forward presentation of the Truth. They recognized these men as of the same character – filled with Jesus' Spirit. And to this day this is true of the followers of Jesus. As the Apostle wrote, "God hath not given unto us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7.) All of the Lord's people should remember this point and should cultivate such a spirit and be copies of the Lord Jesus and of the faithful Apostles, so that of all such people might take knowledge that they have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

But let no one forget that there is only one way of coming into relationship with God – through the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle indicates in this discourse, "There is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." We must have faith in Jesus. We must understand that He died for the sin of the world. We must make a personal acceptance of Him as our Savior. We must consecrate our little all to follow in His steps faithfully, even unto death. On these conditions we become His disciples; and having become disciples, learners in the School of Christ, and having been begotten of the Holy Spirit, we are privileged to show forth more and more His praises and to let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our good works and our likeness to the Master, may glorify God on our behalf.

The Sanhedrin were perplexed as they perceived that the disciples had so strong a case, and had really turned the tables upon them, charging them before the people with being the real culprits – murderers of the Son of God, the Messiah. As they looked at the man who had been healed, they perceived a great miracle. They could say nothing. So they put forth the Apostles from their midst, that they might discuss the case privately. They could not deny the miracle, and they were afraid of what it might lead to if talk of this kind about Jesus and about their being His murderers should spread amongst the people to any degree. They thought best to let the disciples go, charging them, threatening them, not to preach any more in the name of Jesus.

COURAGE IN PREACHING THE GOSPEL

Then was shown the marvelous courage of the Apostles. They replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The Bible directs the followers of Jesus to be subject to the powers that be. (Romans 13:1-7;

1 Peter 2:13-17.) But while seeking to be thus law-abiding in every respect, Christians are to recognize that there is a still higher Law and a still higher Ruler, and are to be subject to the worldly powers only in the absence of a contrary admonition from the Higher Power – from God.

God had commanded the disciples through Jesus that they should be God's mouthpieces to preach the Gospel Message that the death of Jesus was efficacious for the cancellation of sins; and that He who was slain was by and by to come and set up His Kingdom, and to bless the world by releasing it from the bondage of sin and death. They were also to invite all who had faith to believe this Message to associate themselves as disciples of Jesus, loyal and faithful to the Prince of that Kingdom which is not yet set up. By such faithfulness they would manifest the faith that was in them and their loyalty to God; and on account of this they were promised a share with Messiah in the Kingdom which He would establish.

It was therefore the duty of the Apostles, as it is the duty of all the followers of Jesus, to make known the Gospel Message wherever there are hearing ears, and not to fear what man may do – although it would be our duty not to offend against the laws by holding a meeting where the crowds would interfere with traffic, or otherwise be in conflict with legal regulations. The Apostles were not interfering with the regulations of the Jewish Law in speaking in public, as they did in the Temple. Their courage was really authorized by the Law; and the Sanhedrin, in forbidding them, went beyond its bounds.

The Church, young in faith, had no doubt been greatly distressed by the imprisonment of the leading disciples; and when they were released, then a general meeting for rejoicing and praise to God was held, thanking the Lord for the courage given to the Apostles, for the promises of His Word, and for the miracle which had led up to all this. As a consequence, we read that all were so encouraged that "they spake the Word of God with boldness"; and that "with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all."

Our Golden Text, in full accord with the lesson, is properly an exhortation to all of God's people everywhere to be faithful and loyal to God and His Cause. Let us each apply it to himself: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

BROTHERHOOD IN THE ANOINTED ONE – R. 4317

ACTS 4:32; 5:11

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight."
– Proverbs 12:22

THIS lesson brings before our minds in sharp contrast a true and a false brotherhood in the Church. A shining example of the true was Barnabas, while Ananias and Sapphira were conspicuous illustrations of the false. The five hundred brethren who had become believers during our Lord's ministry, and who were thus prepared in advance for the Pentecostal blessing, were added to abundantly by the thousands converted on the day of Pentecost. As a whole, they were a very choice class. Only the children of the light, "Israelites indeed," stood loyally with the Redeemer during his trials and revilings. And a similar class of "Israelites indeed" proved amenable to the lessons and demonstrations and preaching of Pentecost Day. These were devout men, out of all the country around Judea, who

were visiting Jerusalem at the time, attending a religious festival, in compliance with the demands of the Law.

"SATAN CAME ALSO"

With such a flood of popularity as came to the Church at Pentecost, it was only to be expected that some would be carried in by the excitement and the miracles and the favor of the Lord who were not "Israelites indeed." But the latter evidently were few comparatively. Amongst the true, there was the fervor, the love, the fellowship of kindred minds. They realized themselves children of God, and brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of each other. The experience was a new one, and the holy Spirit ruling in their hearts their sympathies flowed together in one common stream. Were some of them poor or crippled, lowly or sad, the others took delight in ministering to their comfort. They were brethren in the fullest, deepest sense. How blessed this relationship none can really know, except those who have experienced it.

How few have experienced this mutual love in this our day! The mixture of the spirit of worldliness has so diluted the spirit of the Master in the hearts of the majority that true, brotherly love is but little understood. Nowhere probably in the world is the spirit of the brotherhood of the early Church more manifest today than amongst the gathering of the WATCH TOWER readers, in general conventions, or in lesser gatherings. It is beautiful indeed, heart-refreshing, to note the loving interest manifested one toward another. It evidences our return to the simplicity which is in Christ, and to the fellowship of his Spirit. Let us be glad for this. Let us cultivate this proper spirit, that the love of God and the love of the brethren may be more and more shed abroad in our hearts.

COMMUNISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Selfishness is buried under love; or rather, temporarily, it is filled, for selfishness is the spirit of the world and of the Adversary, while love is the Spirit of God, the holy Spirit. We are not supposing that in their fervency and in their comparative ignorance of their own weaknesses and of the weaknesses of each other, the early followers of the Lord started the Communistic arrangement. Putting all their property and wealth together, they shared it as each had need. The lesson ultimately was a good one: (1) It showed both them and us what should, by right, be the spirit of all who love the Lord and are begotten by his holy Spirit to the New Nature, as members of the Body of Christ, his brethren, God's people. All of the poor in heart should still feel longings for such a condition of mutual helpfulness. However, this lesson learned, another was needed, namely, that the Lord's people, with the best of intentions in their hearts, are so differently organized physically – fallen in such different directions – that it is not practical, not feasible, for them to attempt to live together along Communistic lines. While giving each other credit for purity of heart and honesty of motives, the Lord's people learn that in their flesh dwelleth no perfection, and, likewise, none in the flesh of their brethren. Hence, with the same love in our hearts, the one for the other, we have learned that it is better to allow each other full freedom and full responsibility as respects the management of earthly affairs, and that this is the condition in which each can be happiest, and in which each can make greatest progress and learn best the needed lessons of preparation for the Millennial Kingdom and its services.

The early Church learned this lesson speedily. Its Communism did not last long. First of all the apostles found that, notwithstanding the confidence of the Church in them as spiritual and able ministers of the Gospel, and specially sent of the Lord, there were murmurings against them, because some thought that their interests were not so well served from the general fund as those of others. This led to the giving over of the management to the deacons, and ultimately the entire project fell to pieces. It taught a lesson profitable

to the Lord's Church from that same to the present time. That lesson is that it is possible to have Communism in heaven, or on earth amongst perfect men, but not feasible to have it amongst those who are imperfect, and whose tastes and appetites, experiences, etc., are diverse. This is our answer to the dear friends who occasionally urge the expediency of Socialistic and Communistic arrangements at the present time.

We assure them, first, that the project is not feasible, because, however sympathetic and loyal our hearts are one to the other, our mortal bodies and their tastes cannot be kept in full harmony. And discord becomes the more serious, the more close the contact and unlimited the time. Furthermore, as the Lord raised up the great persecution which scattered the Church and its Communism and sent them everywhere as solitary witnesses for the Truth, so, we believe, it will be here. The Lord wills that his people shall be scattered throughout the world, in order that they may the better let their lights shine in the midst of the earthly darkness, bearing witness to the Truth.

BARNABAS – SON OF CONSOLATION

The description given us in the lesson beautifully illustrates the spirit of full consecration to the Lord – a full love and generosity towards all the brethren and a full confidence in the apostles as the Lord's representatives. Their wealth was brought and laid at the apostles' feet. Amongst others who did thus was Joseph, the uncle of John Mark, supposedly a member of a wealthy family, residing in the Mount of Olives, in the house the garden of which was our Lord's Gethsemane. He now had become an earnest follower of the Nazarene. He sold a field which he possessed and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet. He was evidently a man of great sympathy and beautiful character, as is evidenced by the surname given him in the early Church, namely Barnabas. The word signifies, "Son of a consoling message," or, more briefly, "Son of consolation." Thank God the same spirit is yet to be found amongst his people. Some of them are sons and some of them are daughters of consolation, especially to his other sons and daughters – sympathetic, loving, kind, helpful.

Barnabas was a Levite, and hence was trained with a view to the work of a teacher, instructor amongst his people. Tradition has it that he became acquainted with Saul of Tarsus in the Gamaliel school. However, the bonds of union between the two, which subsequently took them forth as messengers of the good tidings, was not the earthly tie, but the spiritual one. So with us. The more we possess of the spirit of holiness, devotion to God, to righteousness, the spirit of love and devotion to the brethren, the more may we be sons of consolation, pouring forth upon all with whom we have contact the unction from the "Holy One," the anointing, the perfume of love.

Barnabas is set before us in the lesson as a sample of the spirit of proper fellowship and brotherhood in the early Church, and the consolation resulting. Let it be so with us. Let us each strive to be worthy of this name – Barnabas – in our home relationship, and especially in the Church of Christ. Let us see to it that we are not strife-breeders, but peacemakers. Let us remember the words of inspiration, "Mark them that cause divisions amongst you, and avoid them" – reprove them by avoiding them. Show them that you do not sympathize with such a strifeful, unholy spirit. We are not to smite them, nor to speak evil of them, nor to revile them in turn again, but simply to give our attention and smiles and cheering words to others, to such as manifest more of the Lord's Spirit. To those who can be helped at all, such a course will be very helpful, far more so than fellowshiping with them, which might, indeed, encourage them to feel that they had the approval of the pure in heart and noble in mind. We are to distinguish between such an avoidance and such a fellowship and the appointment to honorable positions in the Church as

one thing, and the still different matter of disfellowshiping and cutting off from the Body of Christ, the Church. The latter can be properly done only according to the rules prescribed by our Master in Matt. 18:15-17.

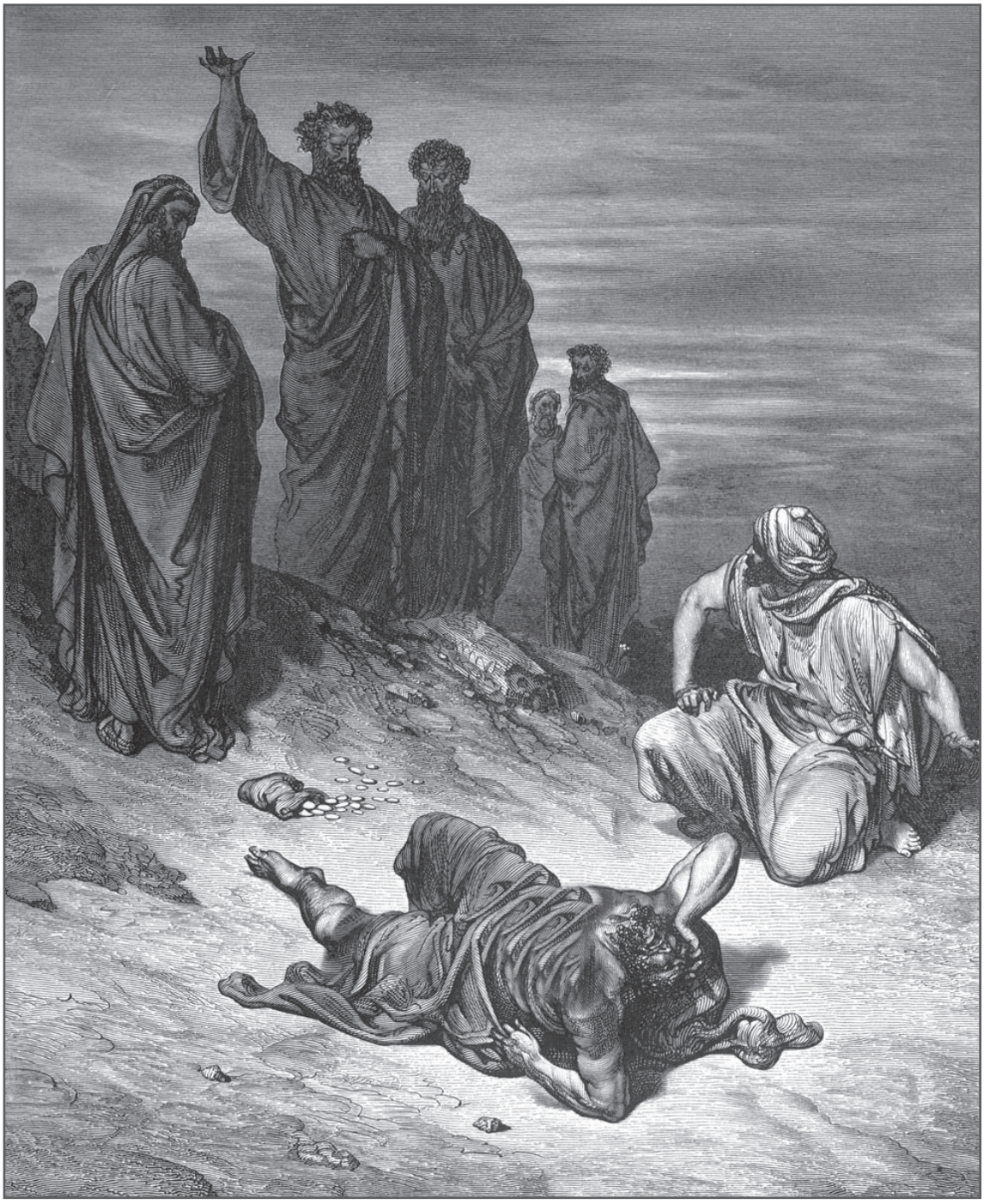
"SATAN FILLED THY HEART"

Now we come to the other side of the lesson. In Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, we have an illustration of a deceitful, hypocritical spirit, displeasing to God, and to all the right-minded of his children. These desired and appreciated the general spirit of the Church, and wished to share in it, but wished to keep back a part of the price. As St. Peter pointed out they had a perfect right to do this, and might have kept it all, but they had no right to lie about it, to pretend that they were making a full consecration of everything, when the case was otherwise. Therein consisted their fault. They might indeed have deceived their fellow-creatures of the Church, but they could not deceive the Lord. St. Peter, under the power of the holy Spirit, and possessing the gift of discerning the spirits, was made acquainted with the situation, and, acting under Divine guidance, he reproved them in the name of the Lord, and the result was their death, as recorded.

Although we are not of those who believe that they went to eternal torment, it might seem to us strange that the Lord's providence would not grant them instruction on the subject, rather than permit their destruction. We may safely assume that the imposing of a summary death sentence upon them was with a view of giving a general lesson to the Church, not only of that day, but ever since. It would not at all surprise us if Ananias and Sapphira would have some portion of God's Great Plan in the future, when they may learn the error of their course and mend their way and learn righteousness. It would appear as though they had share with the Church in the various blessings thus far enjoyed. We doubt, however, if they were spirit-begotten ones, and hence amenable to the Second Death. However, we may be sure that when all the secrets are unfolded, the wisdom, love, justice and power of our God, in connection with this and every other obscure dealing of his, will be made fully manifest.

The lesson brought great fear to the whole Church; not the fear which has torment, not the fear which comes from lack of faith, but the proper kind of fear, the fear of reverence, the fear of trifling, of offending our gracious Father and Lord, from whom we have already received so many blessings and from whom we are expecting to receive the crowning blessings of glory, honor and immortality. This was the fear to which the Apostle referred, admonishing that we should all have, saying, "Let us fear, lest a promise being made us of entering into his rest, any should seem to come short of it."

Our Golden Text points us to God's abomination of lying lips and his delight in the Truth. The principle of Truth is honesty, and it effects not only our words, but all of the conduct of life; yea, and also our thoughts. Hypocrisy is deceit of action. To deceive another is lying in one of its most unworthy forms. And, as the mainspring of life is in the heart, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the conduct of life is arranged, we may see that a deceitful heart and a deceitful mind are most dangerous things in the world. How jealously, therefore, God's people should guard their thoughts – in respect to God, in respect to the world, in respect to every word and act, to the intent that no injustice is permitted, no falsehood is recognized. Such are the pure in heart. Such are the saints. Such will see God and be joint-heirs with their Lord. How diligently, then, we should watch our hearts, our thoughts, that they be honest, true, truthful, in every sense and particular!



Death of Ananias by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.
Acts 5:5

LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT – R. 2101

ACTS 4:32-5:11

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."
– 1 Samuel 16:7

THE number of believers in Jerusalem was now considerable. Their new faith broke down the walls of prejudice and tended to bring rich and poor to the plane of common brotherhood in Christ. This is always the tendency with those who receive the gospel of the Lord Jesus into good and honest hearts: they are "pitiful," "kind one to another" and "love as brethren." Experience teaches us, however, that so long as there are hypocrites, who follow merely for the loaves and fishes, and so long as we are without the inspired apostles, possessed of superhuman wisdom in discerning spirits and rebuking them, and so long as even the true-hearted have such various developments of character and judgment, it is unreasonable to expect that believers could dwell together harmoniously and to mutual benefit. The incapable ones always feel themselves the most capable, and are the least willing to be guided by the judgment of others. The most capable are the most humble, the least disposed to grasp authority and to "exercise Lordship" such as would be necessary for the proper control of the incompetent. Hence, Christian people of experience and judgment have reached the conclusion that general communism of goods such as was practiced for a time in the early Church as narrated in this lesson could not be profitably practiced by Christian people in any age or country, for the same reasons that it was unsuccessful in the early Church. When that which is perfect shall have come, it will be possible for those possessed not only of perfect hearts (wills) but also possessed of perfect brains and bodies, to use communistic principles properly and to their general advantage. But all people of judgment and experience know that this time has not yet come. The failure of this early Church community and the failure of scores of communities since then is ample proof of this.

(33) Evidently the chief subject of discourse with the apostles was the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead and the proof which this afforded of several things: **(1)** That he was approved of God, that he was what he claimed to be, the Messiah, and not an impostor; **(2)** that his death was the great sin-offering, the ransom price for the whole world; **(3)** that in his name was forgiveness of sins and all power for reconciliation with the Father; **(4)** that a New Dispensation of grace, mercy, forgiveness of sins had displaced the Law Dispensation of Justice, and that, now, not only could there be acceptance with God through Christ, but a high calling to jointheirship with the Messiah in his Kingdom soon to be established, in which all the families of the earth shall be blessed. The apostles hung the entire weight of their testimony upon this one matter – the resurrection of our Lord. And the Apostle Paul's preaching, later, is no less emphatic upon this than the Apostle Peter's at the time of this lesson, for he declares, – If Christ be not risen your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, ye are yet in your sins, and we (apostles) are false witnesses, because we have testified that God raised up Christ from the dead, whom he raised not up, if so be that the resurrection of the dead is an impossibility. – 1 Cor. 15:15-18.

(34) The true spirit of Christ is indicated by the fact that the needy were not suffered to lack while the others had plenty. The Apostle James calls attention to this matter, saying, He who seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And again, we are told by the divine Word, that it is not sufficient that we should express sympathy and good wishes, saying, Depart and be fed and clothed, but give not those things which are necessary to these ends. Undoubtedly, it is the design of the divine plan that the inequalities of the present time – poverty in the midst of wealth – shall be to some extent

an opportunity to those who have this world's goods, and a test to them of their faithfulness as stewards. And the Scriptures pertinently inquire, If ye love not your brother whom ye have seen, how can ye love God whom ye have not seen? Hence, the Lord's work and the Lord's poor are permitted by him to be in ***need*** sometimes, in order to furnish opportunities to test those who have means entrusted to them. He who is unfaithful as a steward of earthly wealth need scarcely expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches.

It appears from the account that the apostles did not institute the community of goods in the early Church, rather it was the spontaneous sentiment of the believers; and the apostles under the divine guidance did not hinder it, evidently to the intent that an object lesson might be furnished and the importance of consecration illustrated in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. The writer first mentioned instances of those who honestly consecrated all of their property to the general good. Notable amongst these was Barnabas who afterwards was the associate of the Apostle Paul in doing a great work. The principal figures in the lesson, however, are Ananias and Sapphira. None had been ***commanded*** of the Lord to give all their property to the general treasury; nor had there been any request to do so, although it is only a reasonable service for all who realize that they were "bought with a price." But God wants only a free-will consecration. Ananias and his wife saw others do this and were probably anxious for the honor and praise bestowed upon such liberal givers, and concluded that they would make a reputation for themselves among the believers; and at the same time hold back a sufficiency for future requirements. There was nothing necessarily wrong in such a provision, reserving for their own personal use a portion of the proceeds of the sale of their property. The wrong came in the attempted deception of the Church, in the attempt to have the apostles and the fellow-believers think that they were exercising all the faith and practicing all the self-denial, which some others had practiced. The Apostle Peter indicates that this was not merely lying to the Church and attempting to deceive the Church, but more, it was an attempted deception of the Holy Spirit.

The penalty was death to both the participants, for husband and wife alike united in deception. The Lord would evidently thus teach the Church, **(1)** that while men might be deceived, it was impossible to deceive God; and **(2)** that such a fraud is a very heinous sin in God's sight.

The question naturally arises, Was this death of Ananias and Sapphira merely a prompt infliction of the Adamic death, under whose sentence they already were? Or, was it the infliction of the Second Death, and does it teach us that the attempted deception of the Holy Spirit is punishable by the Second Death; and that there is no hope in any sense of the word for Ananias and Sapphira. No one, we believe, can satisfactorily answer this question, because the facts relating to the matter are too indefinite. For instance, we do not know whether they had "passed from death unto life" (reckonedly from the Adamic death to life in Christ). We do not know that they had more information on this subject than some who followed the Lord and to whom he said, "Ye follow me, because of the loaves and the fishes." Ananias and Sapphira may never have been true converts at heart, but merely, yet in their sins, have been struck with the possibilities of the growing community, and acquainted with some in it; they perhaps thought it a good opportunity to fix themselves for future days, and in order to have a standing and place in the community were willing to give part of the proceeds of their property. If this was their state of heart, if they had never really received the grace of God, then we believe that their death was merely a sooner accomplishment of the general sentence of the Adamic death and not Second death; and we should expect that the due time will come in the Millennial Kingdom, when the blinded eyes of their understanding would be opened, and they should see matters in a full,

clear and proper light with the opportunity of either accepting or rejecting God's provision. But if they had come to a clear knowledge of the truth, had tasted of the heavenly gift and had been made partakers of the holy spirit, and then sinned willfully in this matter, we should understand that their death was the Second death, the penalty for their own willful transgression. The particulars are not stated, nor was it necessary to the narrative. The lesson to the early Church and the lesson to us is the same in either case; namely, that it is impossible to deceive God who discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This entire lesson brings forcibly to our thought the fact that every "new creature in Christ" has consecrated something to the Lord. Our offering should be not merely a portion of our substance, but all of it, including ourselves – time, influence, possessions – and these we may lay not at the apostles' feet, but at the feet of our Lord, in consecration. We cannot refrain from the thought – How many who have consecrated their ***all*** to the Lord are attempting not only to deceive the Lord, but to deceive also themselves, and to give a portion only of that which they have consecrated?

This is the great point of this lesson to all who are of this consecrated class; and the Apostle Peter's words to Ananias should be carefully weighed and applied by each one who has professed full consecration to the Lord – "While it [thy possessions] remained was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" We may apply this to ourselves, and say, The Lord did not compel my consecration; it was a voluntary thing, even though admitted to be a reasonable service; and as we have hitherto seen in the Lord's estimation, it is a very serious matter to make vows and afterward to re-consider, or attempt to take back, that which we have consecrated to him.

No wonder great fear came upon all the Church – the feeling of responsibility; a feeling that in contracting with the Lord they were engaged in serious business. And so the Apostle says to the consecrated, "Let us fear, lest a promise having been left us, any of you should seem to come short of it."

CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM – R. 5849

ACTS 4:32 – 5:16

"Love one another from the heart fervently." – 1 Peter 1:22

GOD is Love; and all, in proportion as they have fellowship with God, must have His character-likeness and be loving, generous, kind. Selfishness is of Satan, the Adversary. He is the embodiment of that spirit, since he allowed pride and ambition to mislead him. The world, under the influence of the prince of this world, Satan, and the influence of the fall, is a selfish world, and to that extent ungodly. The work of the Millennial Age will be to give all mankind a full opportunity of recovery from the snare of the Devil – to Restitution, to recovery of all that was lost in Adam, and redeemed for Adam and his race by Jesus. That will be a glorious Millennium, helpful and uplifting to all the willing and obedient. The Church at that time will be with Jesus on the spirit plane, invisible to men and armed with all the power of God. Her work, like her Lord's is described. She will share with her Lord in His Kingdom rule, His Priesthood and His Judgeship – giving chastisements or rewards to mankind, and these shall be designed with a view to educating them, to uplifting them to the condition of perfection.

This Gospel Age is the period in which God has been selecting this Church from amongst mankind. All of the select ones will be saints, regardless of denominational lines. God has

destined that none shall be of that company except those who are copies of His Son. (Romans 8:29.) The Church has received special testing and education for the glorious mission marked out for her – the blessing of judging the world. The Church must not only have a sympathy for others, but must cultivate this quality to the attainment of Christ's likeness in heart, and as much as possible must have that likeness in outward living and in thinking.

The record tells us that the number of believers was many thousand in a little while. The spirit of love began to burn in their hearts – thankfulness to God, appreciation of His favor, a desire to serve Him, and a sympathy and love for the brotherhood.

We perceive that some were poor; and, controlled by the spirit of love, the well-to-do felt that they would like all the poorer brethren to have just as good as themselves. First they gave privately one to another, as they realized the needs. Then the matter went further and they organized a little community. Many of the wealthier sold their possessions and turned in the money to the Lord's treasury, desiring that a certain amount be supplied to themselves and all the other members of the community – share and share alike.

This manifested a very beautiful spirit, and under perfect conditions would have been the wise as well as the proper course. As it was, the community proved a failure. Nevertheless, the Lord apparently permitted that test and failure for a good purpose – to show us that no such community amongst His people is possible at the present time. The community principle will prosper wonderfully as soon as Messiah's Kingdom is established; but it is impracticable at the present time, as it was in the days of the Apostles.

BARNABAS NOT AN APOSTLE

This lesson introduces us to Barnabas, a godly man and wise, a mighty power in the Church. His name signifies consolation, and evidently it was an appropriate name. His proper name was Joses; and he must have been a very fine character when the Apostles gave him the new name Barnabas – implying that he had a beautiful spirit and was in his daily life a "son of consolation" to the brethren and all with whom he had contact.

Barnabas had a property or estate, and sold it, and brought the proceeds to the Apostles' feet. He was not an Apostle, for of them there were only Twelve, and at this time only eleven, because of the loss of Judas. St. Paul, the twelfth Apostle, the Lord's chosen vessel, and "not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5), had not yet had his eyes opened to the truth of the Gospel.

Barnabas was quite willing to take his share with the others from the general dole; however, amongst those who accepted the terms of the proposition were Ananias and his wife Sapphira. These had property and sold it and kept back a portion of the price, bringing the remainder to the Apostles as though it were the entire sum. Indeed in conspiring between themselves they had agreed to declare that the money they turned in to the treasury was all they received from the property. Our lesson tells of how St. Peter treated the matter. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" He pointed out to Ananias that the property was his own, that he was not compelled or urged to donate it to this community, that it was only his own voluntary gift, and that he had thus lied to God, and not merely to the community. Ananias, hearing these words, fell down dead – smitten of the Lord; and his wife suffered similarly a little later. A great fear fell on all the company when they heard of these things.

WHY REPENTANCE WAS NOT PREACHED

St. Peter doubtless remembered his own sad experience when he once denied the Lord.

We query, Why did he not sympathize with Ananias and Sapphira, pointing out to them wherein they had erred, and urge them to repentance, and join with them in prayer rather than pronounce upon them the death penalty?

Our thought is that these two culprits were not really God's children – that they had never received the begetting of the Holy Spirit; and that the Lord took this opportunity to give a great lesson to the Church – to remind them that they were dealing, not with flesh and blood, but with Jehovah God. From this viewpoint, it was worth while to sacrifice these two persons under Divine judgment with a view to teaching the Church, then and in future generations, how displeasing in the Lord's sight is hypocrisy – especially in respect to religious things.

If these two had been spirit-begotten, then their punishment would be the Second Death; and we would have no Scriptural ground for expecting them to have any resurrection or future consideration from the Lord. But if they were merely children of this world, not fully appreciative of spiritual things, their future interests are not destroyed. They still belong to the great world of mankind for whom Christ died, and have not yet received in full the blessings of reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus. Such glorious favor may be expected for the world in general, in the sweet by and by – during the Millennium, when "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" and be brought to a knowledge of the Truth and to an opportunity of accepting the same unto salvation.

If our surmise be correct, Ananias and Sapphira were in a very different position from Judas, who had companied with our Lord for years, who had witnessed His miracles, had received of His Holy Spirit and through that power had cast out demons, healed the sick, etc. Our charitable thought for Ananias and Sapphira is, that if they had not received the Holy Spirit they but imperfectly appreciated what they were doing. Although they did know that they were practising a deception, they apparently did not get a proper focus upon the matter. Our expectation for them is that they have not sinned unto death; and that the life which they lost they will have back again in the resurrection time, with full opportunity to get matters straight and to determine finally their loyalty or disloyalty to God under the illumination which they will then have.

The designed effect was realized. Great fear and respect for God and everything appertaining to Him in religion fell upon the whole multitude. It was worth while to punish the one couple severely, in view of the preparation made for their blessing in future and in view of the lesson which their experience brought to the remainder of the Church.

THE SAME SPIRIT OF DECEPTION NOW

We are not gifted, as was St. Peter, with authority to represent the Lord's interests in judging others. It would appear, however, from all that we are able to know, that there are many today living equally deceptive lives. We are not permitted to judge them, but they judge themselves by what they tell us. They profess to be consecrated to the Lord – Jehovah – sacrificed to the Divine cause. Nevertheless they keep back much through self-will, professing to be fully devoted followers of Jesus.

Some of these, doubtless, belong to the same class as Ananias. They have become associated with Christians, but have never been begotten of the Holy Spirit and have really neither part nor lot with Christ. Others may be real Christians, and be keeping back part of their consecration. If so, the latter may be sure that they will be dealt with. So the Apostle declares, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not [need to] be judged [of the Lord]. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." (1 Corinthians 11:31,32.) Such Christians, building upon the Rock Christ

Jesus, will apparently need to come through the fiery ordeal pointed out in the Bible, and "wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb," in great tribulation – for failing to live up to their covenant of complete sacrifice. – Revelation 7:9-17.

It would indeed appear as though hypocrisy, which the Bible intimates is especially wicked in the sight of God, is practised to a great length amongst the nominal followers of Jesus. Professions of creeds not believed and a form of godliness without its power seem on every hand to tell us that many must be living hypocritically and subject, therefore, to the Divine judgment. The lesson to us is, "Take heed that no man take thy crown."

Our Golden Text here comes in appropriately. We are to love one another – first our Heavenly Father, then our Heavenly Lord Jesus; and finally, we should love, and as we have opportunity serve, the brethren. Actively engaged in this manner, we shall be kept from hypocrisy and be ready for our share in the Heavenly Kingdom.

ATTEMPTING TO DECEIVE GOD – R. 2943

ACTS 5:1-11

"Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor."
– Ephesians 4:25

"WHILE MEN slept the enemy came and sowed tares," our Lord's parable explains. After the apostles fell asleep in death the Adversary had a comparatively free hand in the sowing of the seeds of error, and cultivated in the Church the tare class, as a result. But at the time of our lesson – shortly after Pentecost – circumstances were different. The apostles were still in the Church, and exercised the special powers of the holy spirit conferred upon them, as the Lord's representatives, for the establishment of the Church – sowing only the good seed, and hindering the Adversary from sowing tares or hypocrites in it. Our lesson illustrates the method by which the Lord, through the apostles, kept the infant church free from hypocrites.

As previously suggested, a partial community of interest amongst the believers was early established. A number of the faithful had already sold possessions and contributed to the general fund. Joses was one of these whose case is particularly cited. (Acts 4:36,37.) He was one of the noble brethren whose generosity and helpfulness in the Church was generally recognized, so that amongst the believers he received a new name, Barnabas, which signifies "son of consolation," or son of comfort and helpfulness.

Although there was nothing compulsory upon any in respect to this selling of goods and giving to the common treasury, the very fact that those who did so were highly esteemed in the Church would naturally become a snare to some who, without the real spirit of helpfulness and sacrifice, would appreciate and desire to have the approbation of the brethren. Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, were of this class, desirous of the approval of the Church, yet deficient in the real spirit of sacrifice. They had a property which they determined to sell, and in order to pass before the believers as saints of the same order as Barnabas, they pretended to give to the general fund the full amount received for the property. Secretly, however, they had much less generous sentiments; they agreed together that they would retain part of the sale-money for future contingencies, – yet would pass as sacrificers to the full amount.

The wrong of their course is manifest. As the Apostle Peter declared, the property was their own, and after they had sold it they still had a right to do as they pleased with the proceeds;

but they should have been honest about the matter, and if they wished to give a tenth, a half or all of the amount, it was a matter of their own business alone, and no one would have had the least right to find fault with or criticise them. The entire wrong consisted in the deception practiced – the palming off of a part of the price as the whole, for the purpose of deceiving the Church and of gaining an applause for an amount of sacrifice more than they made. In this and in this alone consisted the sin for which they both died.

The record is that "great fear came upon all the company" – great reverence for God and for the apostles, his representatives. It brought also a realization that ***consecrations*** to the Lord were far from meaningless forms. This would mean, not only to those who had already espoused the Lord's cause, but also to all who for some time thereafter would identify themselves with the church, that any who were insincere would best make no pretensions to discipleship. Quite probably the influence of the lesson lasted for a considerable time – during the lives of the apostles. Since the death of the apostles, however, any number of hypocrites have come into the Church, – indeed, have been dragged and coaxed in to swell the numbers: and God has been pleased to permit the many false assumptions and false pretenses of these "tares" to go unpunished and unchallenged. (Matt. 13:30.) This does not mean a change on God's part as respects such characters, but rather that the case of Ananias and Sapphira was made a special one to serve as a lesson in the Church. Likewise, the first offence of Sabbath-breaking was punished with death (Num. 15:32-36), although Sabbath-breaking was not similarly punished subsequently under the law. We are not to think of Ananias and Sapphira as being sinners above others of their class, because summary punishment was meted out to them.

Those who believe that eternal torment is the punishment for sin must, to be logical, suppose that Ananias and Sapphira passed on to torments at the hands of devils, from which they have since been suffering, and such must wonder that many who are equally hypocritical in nominal churches of today, so far as human judgment can discern, go unpunished, and are encouraged by their spiritual leaders to hope for a share in the best the future has to give.

From our standpoint – the Bible standpoint – these two deceivers received no other punishment than the loss of the present life; and as they were evidently not of the "wheat" class at all, and had not become partakers of the holy spirit, but deceived themselves, as they attempted to deceive others, their conduct did not affect their cases everlastingly, but merely as respects the present life. They were made an illustration of a principle – they served as ensamples for the instruction of the Church. They received the full penalty of their deception in the loss of present life. As respects the future life, an opportunity for which the Lord Jesus has purchased for all mankind, it will "in due time" be thrown open to them and to the whole world, to be accepted or rejected, under terms of clear knowledge and obedience. They are still heirs to a share of those blessings which will come to the world after the spirit-begotten Church shall have been glorified, and begun the work of blessing all the families of the earth.

The particulars of the lesson require no further detailing. We merely note the fact that the Apostle Peter evidently had the gift of discerning spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), and that God fortified the knowledge granted him, as evidence or proof of his apostleship. We proceed next to consider some of the lessons which may properly be learned from this incident of the past, by the Lord's consecrated people of today. The lesson is that God desires "truth in the inward parts" – in the heart – and that any who have not this quality – candor, honesty, truthfulness – cannot be pleasing to God; and therefore cannot share in the glories shortly to be dispensed to the elect class of this Gospel age. – Psa. 51:6.

As we look at ourselves, we come to realize how imperfect are all the members of the fallen race; and when we consider God's perfection, we can conceive of only one quality that the fallen creature could possibly possess, that would meet with divine approval – even when viewed through the merit of Christ's atonement. That one quality is honesty. The true Christian must, in ***honesty***, confess his own shortcomings, his own deficiencies. He must, in honesty, acknowledge that his sufficiency is of God, through Christ and not of himself. He must honestly strive for the standard set before him in the Gospel. He must honestly admit that he cannot do the things that he would. He must candidly and fully accept the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, as the covering for his blemishes. We are inclined to the belief that the greatest sin in the Church – even amongst the consecrated believers – is the sin of dishonesty – the sin of which divine disapproval is so excellently illustrated in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

We have no desire to distort, or to make matters appear worse than they really are; but from our standpoint the nominal church teems and overflows with just such hypocrites – self-deceived, to some extent. These are the tares, or imitation wheat.

Do not all who claim to be Christians profess to be following in the footsteps of Jesus, – to bear his name, to be his Church, his body, and to take up his cross and follow him? Yet how comparatively few of the nominal whole have or have ever had any thought of so doing? By their profession they declare that they have sold their earthly possessions, their earthly interests, that they have sacrificed these, and presented the whole matter as a loving gift and sacrifice to the Lord; yet in reality they have done nothing of the kind, and never for a moment thought of even as much liberality to the Lord's cause, keeping as proportionately little to themselves, as did Ananias and Sapphira.

We cannot judge the heart, and will not attempt to do so. We cannot even always tell which are grains of "wheat" and which "tares," but out of their own mouths we may judge those who profess to be "wheat." Some professing thus, and occupying very high positions in the Church, even as ministers of the Gospel, tell us plainly, not only by their actions, but also at times by their words, that in pretending to sell out their interests and to turn over the entire proceeds in consecration to the Lord's service, they have grossly falsified – some of them tell us that they do not even believe the things which they vowed they would preach. They thus tell us that they have been dishonest with men and with themselves, in respect to the things of God. Truly this is a serious, a dreadful condition. The Church of today, instead of being free from deceivers, has them in its very highest positions of trust and honor, – as representatives of the Lord, purporting to be his mouthpieces.

This is an individual matter still, as it was in the days of the apostles. Each individual of the Lord's people must answer for his own course, to the Lord himself. It therefore behooves all those who are seeking divine approval to see to it that they are not influenced by the prevalent disposition to hypocrisy, but that they deal with the Lord in purity and honesty of heart. They should see to it that, having covenanted to give to God and his service their all, they keep nothing back, but consider their time, their influence, their means, their lives, fully devoted to the Lord, and that they use these as his – as they believe he would wish to have them used – as stewards. He who is honest with himself will be honest with God, and be honest also with his fellow-men. As Shakespeare expresses it, –

"To thine own self be true; And
it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to
any man."

Our Golden Text is quite to the point, and requires no comment. We perhaps should, however, guard some against a mistaken view of truthfulness. Some persons of large

conscientiousness fail to properly balance the subject, and reach the conclusion that they are bound to answer every question that may be asked them, telling all that they know upon any subject. This is a mistaken view; we are not bound by any laws of honesty to tell all that we know in all cases. Some people ask questions which they have no proper right to ask – about things which are not their proper business: such persons should not be encouraged; their queries should not be satisfied. Nor is it necessary to truthfulness that we should say to them in so many words, – You are busybodies, and your questions are impertinent, and I will not answer them. On the contrary, a soft answer will be better – an answer which will tell them as much or as little as suits convenience, permitting them to draw the conclusion that for some reason unmentioned you would not care to give a fuller statement of the facts. An exception to this rule would be a case in which the keeping back of the information would be to the injury of the inquirer. Then, love for our neighbor should prompt the giving of the information; perhaps, indeed, the volunteering of it without being asked – especially if it be concerning a matter of which you have not merely an opinion but actual knowledge, without the revealing of which he would suffer injury.

"OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN" – R. 2103

ACTS 5:17-32

THE phenomenal success of the gospel under the apostles' preaching, in the power of the holy spirit, soon awakened bitter opposition on the part of the rulers of the Jews. In a previous lesson we saw that they did not hesitate to put the apostles in prison; and how they sought to convict them of crime for healing the lame man, in the name of Jesus. Their opposition, instead of dying out, increased as they perceived the wonderful strides of progress made by the new doctrine. They felt compelled to make another attempt to head off what they considered the heresy of the Nazarene.

(17,18) The two principal sects amongst the Jews at this time were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees made loud professions of "holiness," and did much in the way of outward display, which our Lord, who could read the heart, declared was hypocrisy; while the Sadducees, better educated as a class and less orthodox, were more after the sort called "higher critics" to-day; or even beyond them, they might be termed to some extent agnostic, – their faith considerably resembling that of the "Reformed Jews" of today. They believed something of the divine promises, but expected them to be fulfilled in a partial manner and in a natural way. They evidently did not expect a supernatural Messiah. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They denied that there are angels or any spirit beings not visible to flesh and blood. The chief priest at this time, we are told by the lesson, belonged to this party. He and his sect were filled with indignation against the new doctrine, for in every sense of the word it specially opposed their teaching – much more so than it opposed Phariseeism.

The expression, "the high priest rose up," does not signify that he had been sitting or lying down and merely stood upon his feet, but might more properly be translated "the high priest was ***aroused***." He and his party, the Sadducees, had hitherto been content to very generally disdain the masses and their views, and to pay little attention to them as inferior in wisdom and judgment on such questions. But now seeing the interest being taken by the public in the apostles' preaching, which declared not only the resurrection of our Lord, but that through the merit of his sacrifice a resurrection to a future life would be provided for all, they were thoroughly "aroused." In the teachings of the apostles they were meeting with a logic which they had never encountered

in arguing with the Pharisees. Accordingly they again sent and laid violent hands upon the apostles and put them into prison.

(19-23) In harmony with the other miraculous interventions of Providence at that time, for the establishment of the Church, the Lord wrought a miracle for their deliverance from prison; but instead of telling them to flee for their lives, he instructed them to go immediately again into the temple and preach as before; and this they did, going early in the morning. Great was the surprise of the General Synod or Great Council of the Jews, which had been convened for the purpose of condemning the apostles, when they learned that the prisoners were not in prison, but preaching as before in the temple.

(24-26) The officials were in consternation. It was bad enough to have men teach the gospel with such power and demonstration as they could not gainsay or resist, but to find that these men even when shut up in prison got out again by miraculous power, was enough to startle them, enough to make them consider afresh whether or not they might not be fighting against God. But they were self-willed men, not in a condition of heart to be influenced by anything, ordinary or extraordinary, which still left them their place and power. They would continue their investigation and endeavor to stop the preaching of the gospel, consequently the apostles were arrested again; but this time with great moderation, for fear of the people. The rulers were beginning to feel that an impression was being made upon the people and that in proportion as the new doctrine progressed they as teachers and rulers fell into disrepute. Indeed, so clearly did the apostles state the matter that those who believed their teachings could not well regard their spiritual rulers in any other light than that of murderers – murderers of the Messiah, the "Prince of life."

(27,28) The language of the Council to the apostles when they were arraigned indicates that they realized the situation when they said, you evidently "intend to bring this man's blood upon us," – to make the people think that we are responsible for his death.

(29-32) The answer of the apostles shows that they were courageous men. They did not deny their preaching, nor its logical inference as understood by the rulers, for it was so. They merely said: "We ought to obey God rather than men." God sent us to preach the gospel, to tell the truth about this matter, and we have merely followed divine instructions. How beautiful, how reasonable, how consistent! There was no braggadocia in the apostles' language. They did not say, You brought us more carefully today than yesterday; you are getting a little afraid of the people; you have found that you cannot keep us in prison, for our Lord will deliver us; you are perhaps getting a little in awe of us by this time. They did not say, We will denounce you still more before the people and raise an insurrection and overthrow your power as sacerdotal rulers. Nothing of this kind; merely the unassuming statement, We have merely obeyed God in what we did.

Then follows another discourse similar to the one given the previous Council, explaining about Jesus, his resurrection and exaltation to divine place and power, and to be the Savior and pardon the sins of Israel. They wound up their testimony by citing them the holy spirit which operated through them as corroborating their witness respecting our Lord, his character, his resurrection, his present glory, and his power to save unto the uttermost all that come to the Father through him.

There is a valuable lesson here for all servants of God today. We too have a commission from the Lord to preach the gospel, and if we would be approved and hear his "Well done, good, faithful servant," we must obey God rather than men. Should faithfulness to God bring us into conflict with the religious great ones, we are to be bold for the truth, but moderate and humble in manner and language. Children of God are never anarchists lawless; and their opposition to human arrangements must only be because moved thereto by higher, divine laws and arrangements.

"FIGHTING AGAINST GOD" – R. 4325

ACTS 5:17-42

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." – Matthew 5:10

WHOM the Lord loveth he chasteneth," is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. Until the principles of Divine government are somewhat understood, it seems absurd to claim that Christians are the special objects of Divine love and care and, at the same time, to admit that generally they have a larger proportion of trials, difficulties, persecutions, etc., than others. The philosophy of this is the interpretation of the Divine Plan of the Ages. From no other standpoint can the matter be reasonably understood in all its details. From any other standpoint the question would arise, Why not have made mankind perfect and have preserved him from undue temptations and have granted him enlightenment that he might always choose the good and refuse the evil? Why not have protected those loyal to the Lord and thus have published the Truth, its Author and its servants? Why not have overwhelmed the evil, instead of allowing the evil in so many ways to vanquish the good – as at the cross, and in all of life's experiences?

"SO IT SEEMED GOOD IN THY SIGHT"

The philosophy of why God permitted the evil to triumph now, as beautifully stated in the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Vol. 1 ("The Plan of the Ages"), we can but briefly suggest here. The permission of evil is but one feature in the Divine program, according to which our Creator purposes that all of his intelligent subjects shall be free moral agents, and that each of them, angels and men, shall be fully tested in respect to their love and loyalty to him and to the principles of righteousness, which he personifies. Additionally we have the special development and testing of character, having been invited to be Joint-Heirs with Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom and properly required to be "more than conquerors" – loyal in the very highest degree, in thought and word and deed. The testing of such for so high a position in the Divine purpose justifies most crucial tests. When it is perceived that this Gospel Age is the period for the selection of this Royal Priesthood for the spiritual plane, and that the Jewish Age was the period for the selection of the earthly representatives of the Kingdom, it can be seen at a glance why the way of the called, chosen, faithful, elect, has been made so narrow; why so few have found it and why still fewer have had the faith and courage and patience to walk therein to the end of life's journey.

OPEN THE PRISON-DOORS

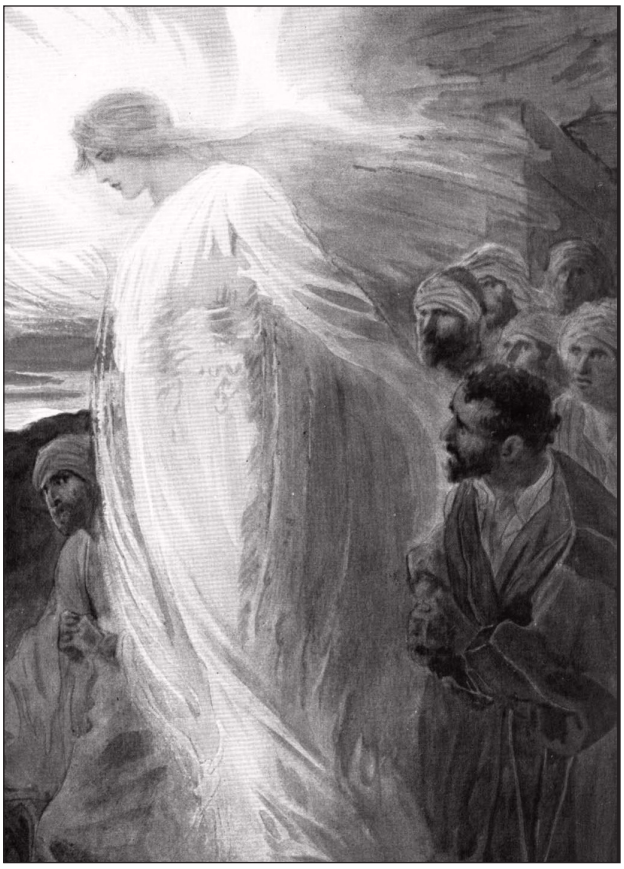
Our lesson is a sequel to the preceding one, which tells of the healing of the lame man in the temple by Peter and John, and of the wonderful opportunity thus afforded the disciples to preach the Gospel to the people and to the rulers. The result of their hearing before the officers was their commitment to prison for a further hearing on the next day, since it was contrary to the Jewish Law that the trial should proceed after dark. Verse 17 in brief space tells us that the high priest, Annas, was a Sadducee, which signifies that they were agnostics and higher critics, who believed nothing respecting the Divine Revelation, nothing of a future life by resurrection, or otherwise. Josephus informs us that most of the upper class of his day were skeptics, Sadducees, though the mass of the people were Pharisees. It will thus be seen that there is a close correspondency between the ecclesiastical conditions in the end of the Jewish Age and those which now prevail in the end of this age. Today, both in pulpit and pew, the more learned from a human standpoint have very slight belief in anything beyond the present life. Their faith has gradually given way under the attacks of Higher Critics and Evolution, because already undermined by the errors of the dark ages, prominently the

teaching that nearly everybody is enroute to eternal torment, either because of Divine inability to prevent it or because of Divine foreordination to that effect.

The teachings of the apostles reflected specially against the Sadducees, because the basis of it was the declaration that Christ had risen from the dead; and secondly, because this very high priest and his associates had been leaders in the conspiracy which led to our Lord's crucifixion. Our text says that they were "filled with indignation" (revised version, "jealousy.") The Greek word seems to signify that they were hot with indignation, and anxious to have them convicted before the Sanhedrin and disposed of. Under these circumstances they were sent to prison.

During the night, however, the angel of the Lord led them forth miraculously while the keepers of the prison slept, and bade them go to the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. Thus did God intersperse evidences of his Divine care and protection with other experiences which seem to be contrary, and thus were the apostles and the early Church and we, who read the account, strengthened and encouraged to have good confidence in the Lord; that greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us, and that even the adverse experiences are of Divine permission. As our Lord said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were permitted of my Father."

Note the expression of the angel's message (v. 20), "All the words of this life." There is a sermon for us in those few words. They remind us that our message consists of "wonderful words of life" – life from the dead, secured for us and ultimately for all, through the death of the Redeemer, and through his resurrection, and to be actually brought to us and to all at his second advent. The words remind us also that we who believe do now, by faith, enter into this newness of life – the resurrection life, in a figurative sense, and that our resurrection, our life, if we are faithful, will come to us as our final "change," in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.



The Apostles delivered from prison

TEACHING THE PEOPLE

Obedient to God's message, the apostles went early to the temple, and began, as before, to teach the people, to explain to them the Old Testament Scriptures and types, which foretold that Messiah should first suffer before he would enter into his glory, and they identified him as the Messiah. They explained his sacrificial death, his resurrection and his sending forth upon believers his holy Spirit, and that this also was foretold in the prophecies. They pointed out that the Gospel message was for the selection of the faithful "Israelites indeed" to be Messiah's Bride and Joint-Heir in his Kingdom later to be established for the blessing of Israel and all the nations of the world. This message still has an attraction for the common people, and would have also for the more educated had not their philosophies and traditions turned

their hearts away from the simplicity of faith in the Lord's Second Coming and Kingdom to a belief that they themselves, without the Lord, are to convert the world – by which they mean civilization.

Meantime the Sanhedrin, or senate, met at the appointed hour, but the officers sent to bring the prisoners found them not – though the prison was every way secured – until it was learned that they were teaching in the temple and evidently having considerable influence with the people; so the officers wisely arrested them quietly, for fear they should create an uproar and be themselves the sufferers.

"BRING THIS MAN'S BLOOD UPON US"

The Sanhedrin acted as the court, the high priest as the prosecutor. Thus, inquiring of the apostles if they were not violating strict orders already given them respecting preaching in the name of the Crucified One, they claimed that he had risen from the dead; that he was Messiah, etc. Not waiting for an answer, the high priest proceeded to show the Sanhedrin the logical effect of their being permitted to continue this teaching – they were filling Jerusalem with their teaching, bringing upon them (the high priest and the Sanhedrin, which had condemned Jesus) this man's blood – that is to say, responsibility for his unjust death. This shows that they appreciated the position, and that the apostles also appreciated it and had told the truth on the subject unsparingly.

The answer of the Apostle Peter and others is given in brief form, but is a model answer in every sense of the word. Not rudely, yet forcefully and logically, they set forth seven points:

(1) That, uncontrovertibly, where the command of God and the command of men conflict, the Divine authority must be recognized as supreme.

(2) That they were loyal to the God of their fathers, whose power in the resurrection of Jesus was being attested.

(3) That it was true that Jewish rulers were responsible for Jesus' death.

(4) That God has honored him, raised him from the dead and taken him to heaven.

(5) That he was the Prince and Saviour of Divine appointment.

(6) That they were not preaching vengeance, but mercy – not penalty for the crucifixion, but forgiveness of sins to all Israel, on condition of repentance.

(7) That they personally were witnesses, and that the power of the holy Spirit in them and in all believers corroborated these facts.

This is a wonderful testimony, and no doubt the experiences of the apostles in being delivered from the prison on the previous night helped to give them the courage so necessary at this moment. No doubt also the knowledge of that incident, coming to Gamaliel, led him to offer the moderate advice which the Sanhedrin followed. He advised them, "Take heed what ye do to these men. If this teaching be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. If it be of men, it will come to naught." The result was that the apostles were again charged not to preach in the name of Jesus, and, by way of showing the authority of the Court, it was ordered that they be whipped, scourged. The apostles, realizing the power of the Lord, endured the chastening with thanksgiving that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus. Thus the Lord blessed them in their hearts with his peace and grace, while he did not shield them from the scourging. In this, also, we learn a lesson respecting Divine providences.

FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM

Our Golden Text applies the general principle enunciated by our Lord, "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom." This is not because Divine power is not able to

shield us from the tribulations, nor because our Lord is not interested in our welfare, but, quite the contrary, because, according to Divine tests placed upon the Church, the New Nature can be developed, educated, crystallized, only through the tests and trials it will endure through its earthly members in the flesh, through loyalty to the Lord. These testings will come along various lines – faith, obedience, endurance, love, etc. And it is only to the overcomers that the reward is promised. But, thank God, grace to help in time of need is promised us. If our hearts are loyal and we do our best, the Lord will see to the remainder.

The Golden Text reminds us that we are to expect persecution, and Bible history shows us that these are to be expected from the church, as much or more than from the world. Indeed, when our Lord speaks of the world, he evidently refers to "Churchianity." He says, "Marvel not if the world hate you. Ye know that it hated me before it hated you." The world that hated Jesus and crucified him was the Jewish world, or nominal Israel; and the world from which we may look for persecution, similarly, would be the so-called Christian world – Christendom. Not only so, but sometimes the persecution comes from those who once were brethren in the Truth – those who once dipped with us in the dish of Divine nourishments at the table of the Lord. The trial is all the more severe when it comes from this quarter. Yet was it not so with our Lord, and does it not seem to have cut him to the quick that Judas kissed him at the very moment that he betrayed him?

But as none of these things moved the Master away from confidence in the Divine providence shaping affairs in the interest of the Church, and as he returned not railing for railing, neither must we. And such experiences rightly received will no doubt make us more and more copies of his dear Son.

Our Lord declares that the blessing for persecution endured is for righteousness' sake, and the Apostle, in line with this, declared, "Let none of you suffer for evil-doing, nor as a busybody in other men's matters." This, of course, will not hinder us from being misrepresented and charged with evil-doing, even as our Lord himself was so charged. Was he not crucified under the charge of blasphemy, which, in his day, was esteemed to be the worst of all offenses? Similarly in our day we must not think it strange if the Adversary shall seek to misrepresent the facts and put light for darkness and darkness for light. It is for each of us to preserve a conscience void of offense towards God and men, that, like the Apostle of old, we may be able to call upon all men everywhere to witness whether or not we have coveted their silver or their gold, or done aught to their injury, or left undone any good toward them that was within our power.

In this connection let us remember also that the decision in each of our cases is with God. As St. Paul declares, "It is a light thing that I should be judged of you or of any man. Yea, I judge not mine own self, but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

34 Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.
35 And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. . . .
39 If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it---lest you even be found to fight against God."
40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.
41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Acts 5:34-35; 39-41

Stephen Berated

Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

Acts 6:11-12

DEACON STEPHEN, CHRISTIAN MARTYR – R. 2951
ACTS 6:7-15

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

STEPHEN may be acknowledged the second Christian martyr – for surely our Lord Jesus was the first. We must begin with the first verse of our lesson-chapter in order to trace the history of this worthy soldier of the cross. An emergency arose in the Church, calling for a force of seven deacons to look after various temporal matters, and Stephen was one of these seven, all of whom were chosen by the congregation, not by the apostles, as men of honest reputation, wise, and full of the holy spirit. This incident suggests to us the loose character of the organization of the early Church. It had not cast-iron rules and laws, except that the Lord, the Redeemer, was the Head of the Church, and that none could be recognized as members thereto except as they recognized him as their Savior and Lord, and made consecration to him, receiving his spirit, and recognized as of his appointment and of the holy spirit's designation his specially chosen apostles, as the authorized instructors of the Church. Aside from this, the necessities of each case seem to have guided: and yet, we may safely presume that in all the arrangements in the Church, as well as in the teachings of the apostles, the holy spirit directed; – for the benefit also of those believing on the Lord through their word, throughout the entire age.

In a previous lesson we saw that a measure of communism was early established in the Church; but the incidents of this lesson clearly imply that it was only limited, and not a complete division of property. It was evidently the intention of the early Church to provide for the poor of their number who were without means of livelihood. Prominent amongst those provided for, if not the only ones, were widows without income; such at that time must have been comparatively helpless and dependent upon charity, since there were so few opportunities for earning a living, especially amongst women.

We are not to suppose that there was any intentional partiality or neglect of the Grecian more than of the Hebrew women. Apparently it was unintentional, and possibly arose from the fact that the apostles, native-born, appreciated more keenly the needs of the native widows than of the foreign-born. These were all Jewesses, of course, whether born in Palestine or born in Greece. Up to this time the Gospel had not been sent to others, – Gentiles. No doubt there was some reasonable cause for the murmur. In any event the apostles manifested their honesty of purpose in the matter by promptly instituting measures for the correction of the difficulty. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people: if difficulties arise, based upon temporal questions, likely to sprout a "root of bitterness" or to cause a schism in the Church, the proper course would be to throw the responsibility upon the shoulders of the whole congregation – to ask for the election of some of the number who could give the matter better attention, and see that all were justly dealt with. We are not to forget that in this as in other ways the Lord has clearly indicated that the ***Church as a whole*** is under his supervision, his care, and that it is therefore proper that the general affairs of the Church be conducted by the ***congregation*** and not by one man, nor by a clerical class.

No doubt some of those chosen for the serving of tables – the money collection and the food distribution – were representatives of the Grecian brethren who, knowing the peculiarities of the Grecian customs, would be the better able to see to the welfare of the Grecian widows. It is here that we get acquainted with Stephen, as one of the seven chosen deacons. The word "deacon" signifies runner, attendant, servant. The "elders" of the Church were more particularly chosen

according to their Christian character and aptness to teach, while the deacons were chosen according to Christian character and aptness in business affairs. In both instances, however, the Christian character, the holiness of spirit and wisdom were primary considerations. So with the Lord's people to-day: those chosen to any part of the service should first of all be recognized as the best and the wisest of the number – the possession of a holy, meek and quiet spirit, of great value, being carefully considered – then natural abilities.

In Stephen's case we see an illustration of the Lord's methods of advancing his people step by step in his service: **(1)** He was honored with a knowledge of the truth: faithful in his acceptance of it, and zealous toward the Lord, he ere long manifested these qualities; and under the guidance of the holy spirit, was chosen a deacon. **(2)** Faithfulness in this, serving tables, prepared him for further opportunities, and **(3)** we find him exercising the gift of healing and performing signs in attestation of his ***ministry of the truth***; which implies that he had actually attained to the position of an elder in the Church tho' the apostles residing in Jerusalem, perhaps, made an unnecessary election of elders, – for they were all elders. (1 Pet. 5:1.) Stephen was so full of the spirit of the truth and devotion to its service that he had the high honor **(4)** of being the first one of the brethren to follow the Master's footsteps in a sacrificial death. Here surely was an advancement in service and its honor that may well quicken and energize all of the Lord's people to greater efforts to serve and please the same Master. He who thus accepted the consecrated Stephen, and advanced him step by step in his service, is ready and willing today to take and use those who are similarly consecrated, and burning with heavenly zeal. He is willing to make of such burning and shining lights in the Church, if they in turn are willing to suffer with him, that they may also be glorified together in due time. – Rom. 8:17.

Stephen's faith and power and opportunities for service came to him along the same lines as faith and power have come to the Lord's people since – whole-hearted devotion to the Lord, to his people and to his truth. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Had Stephen been selfseeking and ambitious for honor of men or of the brethren we may be sure we would have heard little of him, unless, like Ananias, his approbativeness had resulted in his being made an example of evil-doing. This is a danger which besets every brother chosen by the church to any service. Hence the apostle's caution "Be not many of you teachers brethren." Hence the necessity that the Church choose for its servants only those of humble mind; and the need of care amongst these servants that they fall not into the snare of the Adversary, and after having preached to others, themselves become castaways. – Jas. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:6,7; 1 Cor. 9:27.

Stephen in preaching got into a debate with some of his day, and was more than a match for them. As we read, "They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." We are not to suppose that Stephen was the greatest of all orators, nor even that he had no peers amongst those with whom he disputed. In this case the adage was well applied, "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just." It was because Stephen had the truth, the right side of the controversy, and because God was with him, that he was more than a match for any of his adversaries.

The same God is still with his people; and the Lord's Word, therefore, is still worthy of all acceptance, – "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist." (Luke 21:15.) Do we not see this same principle illustrated to-day, when humble ones amongst the Lord's people are more than a match for all their adversaries? The truth being powerful, prevails, though it is not always acknowledged to prevail, even as it was not acknowledged by Stephen's enemies.

We are not advocating public debating of the truth. We believe that debates, as a rule, accomplish little good; because the opponents of the truth are apt to conduct their arguments unfairly, deceptively – apt to strive for victory, rather than to strive for the truth. However, there are cases to-day, like this case of Stephen's, in which the opponents of the truth are the aggressors; and in such cases those who have the truth are not to be ashamed of it, nor fearful, but to trust in the promise of the Lord for words and wisdom for the occasion. We are not given a report of the discussion, but from what we know of Stephen's character, so well illustrated in the discourse subsequently delivered, we cannot escape the conviction that he spoke to his opponents in a kind, generous, reasonable manner – that he neither ranted nor stormed nor endeavored to throw a dust of false arguments. He had the truth, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, and we may be sure that he spoke the truth "in love," according to the apostolic command. – Eph. 4:15.

Stephen's disputants were evidently of the Grecian Jews, and Stephen himself was also probably of this class. Possibly Saul of Tarsus, afterwards the Apostle Paul, was amongst those who disputed with him, as he himself tells us that he was a sort of ringleader amongst those who killed him. (Acts 22:20.) We cannot help wondering to what extent young Saul, the lawyer, instructed by Gamaliel, and an adept in logic, may have taken some lessons and caught some ideas from Stephen's reasoning – not enough, however, to make transformation of his career.

It was Stephen's turn to be called before the Sanhedrin, that he might give the leaders of his people a gospel sermon, the basis of which was Jesus and the resurrection. His opponents, who could not down him in argument, were determined to destroy him; and, like other zealots, deluded by superstition, they were nevertheless influenced by their higher principles to desire to accomplish his destruction ***legally*** – that is to say, with a form of law. Alas, how many people now, as well as then, of comparatively noble mind, succeed in "deceiving their own selves" into thinking that a wrong becomes a virtue, becomes right, if to any extent they can wrap it in the folds of the law! The Lord's people need to have the ***spirit*** of the law, the ***spirit*** of justice, the ***spirit*** of righteousness: without this even the best balanced minds may be led astray under the pressure of zeal, superstition, or error.

The doctors of the law and members of the Sanhedrin (Saul of Tarsus is supposed to have been a member) did not wish to be parties directly to the charges, nor to seem to be interested in the destruction of a noble man. They therefore procured others to give testimony that would be of the kind desired – testimony upon which it would be possible for their distorted judgments and consciences to render a death verdict. Strangely enough, the second martyr, like the first, was convicted of blasphemy against God and against the Temple, and without any more foundation for the charges than in the case of his illustrious Master. Of course the charges were distorted, and yet there was a measure of truth in them. Just how much allowance should be made for those who convicted the Lord and Stephen on such evidence is perhaps difficult for us to judge. Nor is it necessary, because the judgment of such matters is not yet put into our hands. The Lord alone knows to what extent the prejudiced mind was unable to discern the truth, and to what extent the Adversary succeeded in blinding the judgment, so as to make the light appear darkness, the truth appear error.

Doubtless, as Stephen heard the charges against him, and noticed the advancement of the case, he mentally remarked the correspondence between these charges against him and those upon which his Master was convicted. We may be sure that some such thoughts were passing through his mind when his face was so wonderfully lit up with the indwelling joy, that it is recorded that all sitting in the Sanhedrin "looking steadfastly

on him saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel." But even an angelic face could not move such hearts, some of the same, doubtless, that had sat in condemnation of the Master himself. Seemingly, Stephen's witness was fruitless, so far as his auditors were concerned; the same might have been said respecting our Master's trial and testimony. And yet, as the latter bore fruit on the day of Pentecost and afterward, so, doubtless, Stephen's testimony bore fruit subsequently. Who can say that that beaming and angelic face was not one of the "pricks" against which Saul of Tarsus had been contending for some time, when the Lord interrupted him enroute to Damascus?

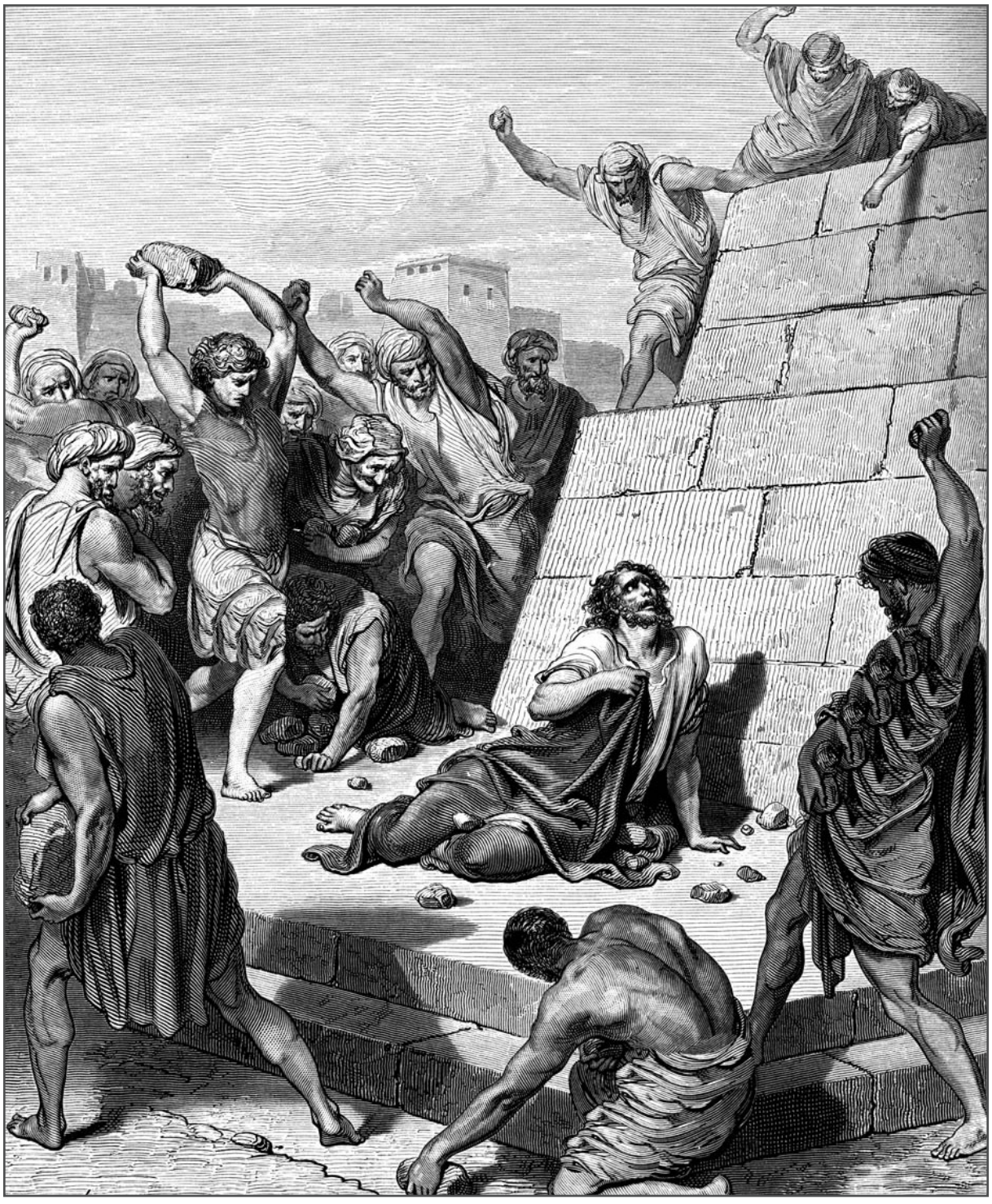
Who can tell that experiences connected with this martyrdom may not have been valuable not only to Saul, but to others? At all events, it was Stephen's duty, as it is our duty, to be faithful under all circumstances, under all conditions, regardless of whether appearances indicate the accomplishment of much, or of little good. We are to remember that the Lord's work is in his own hands, and that our part is to be faithful to him and to the truth, to the extent of our opportunities.

The Editor would like, for himself and for all the Pilgrims, and for all the elders of the Church everywhere, and for all the brethren who speak at all, publicly or privately, in the name of Jesus, that Stephen's beaming face might be impressed upon our memories. If it is, and if every time we stand forth before men publicly or privately, as the representatives of our Lord, we could so realize his blessing and our privilege as his servants, that it would fill our hearts, and beam forth from our faces, in gladness, in thankfulness, for the privilege of serving, then indeed we would have the highest degree of blessing to ourselves, and doubtless also would bring the largest degree of blessing to all those whose hearts would be prepared for the truth, and also for those not yet ready for it, but who are under the Lord's discipline and guidance, in preparation for it, as was Saul of Tarsus.

Our Golden Text is very appropriate in this connection. It is well that the Lord's people, especially when they come into trying positions on account of their fidelity to the truth, should remember these, the Master's words. Men may kill our bodies, or they may speak evil of them, or despitefully use them otherwise; but it is beyond their power to injure us as new creatures, or to ruin our prospects as respects the future life. That life which the Lord has promised to his faithful, – the resurrection life, – is beyond the power of man. It is the eternal, the invaluable life. If we gain it, no matter what the cost may be, as respects the present life, and mortal-body condition, we shall have made a great bargain, we shall have gained a great prize. All who really appreciate it see it to be a "pearl of great price," for which they, like the Master, are willing to lay down all, – to sell all that they have, that they may obtain it.

God is able to kill the soul – able to blot out existence entirely – and he has threatened to do so in all cases of wilful deliberate sin, against full light and knowledge. This is a cause both for comfort and for fear. For comfort, as opposed to the false human teaching that the masses will spend an eternity of woe: for fear, lest after having tasted of divine goodness and learned of God's gracious provisions for such as obey him, any of us should seem to come short and lose our all – life!

To have the proper course in life, to be able to meet the trials and difficulties of life as they come to us, and to meet them in the proper spirit which the Lord directs – in the spirit of rejoicing in tribulation, and counting such experiences all joy, – it is necessary that all fear of man, which brings a snare, shall be removed. And it is our Lord's direction that we shall fear Jehovah, and not fear our mortal fellows. The righteous are bold as a lion, as well as gentle as a dove, and meek as a lamb. This peculiar combination should be found in every Christian, and we doubt if it will be found elsewhere.



Martyrdom of St. Stephen by Gustave Dore, 1866

When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,
Acts 7:54-55

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR – R. 4328

ACTS 6:8-15; 7:54; 8:3

"And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
– Acts 7:59

THE infant Christian Church prospered at Jerusalem. Not only was the Lord's blessing upon the apostles in their ministries, but upon others of the Church also, who, full of love and zeal for the Truth, told the good tidings as they had opportunity. They had the Gospel message in its purity, and it was a pleasure to tell it. They needed not inducements of social advancement, financial prosperity, honorable titles and good salaries. The message itself incited love and devotion, and enkindled a flame of sacred love in their hearts which tended to make each believer a burning and a shining light, as the Lord himself had enjoined. This same condition of things prevails again today, since the smoke of the dark ages is being washed from the eyes of our understanding, and since the dust and must of human tradition are being brushed from the Word of the Lord. Now, as then, the Truth charms, sanctifies, energizes all who receive it. And each, according to his ability, is quickened to its service, regardless of cost or time, of energy, of human disapproval and ostracism.

THE ADVERSARY ACTIVE ALSO

Our great Adversary will usually leave us comparatively at ease, if we are not actively engaged as heralds of the Truth. Indeed, his policies seem to be to minister opiates wherever the Truth is dispensed. He prefers that we sleep and dream, rather than that we be awake and on the alert, putting our lights upon candlesticks, that they may give light to those about us. It is not surprising, therefore, that he stirred up a great persecution against the early Church, because of its activity. We must expect that similarly we will draw his fire upon ourselves, in proportion as we patiently and faithfully fight the good fight against sin and error – darkness.

Stephen, a young man of prominence who had been chosen a deacon at Jerusalem, was very zealous for the Truth. He got into a public discussion, and his opponents, finding their arguments inferior to his, were angered instead of convinced. This shows their insincerity. Had they hungered and thirsted for the Truth, they would have been glad to receive it from Stephen, or from anybody. Let us beware of such a spirit in ourselves, knowing that it is dangerous. In this case it led on to murder; not merely the murder accomplished when Stephen died, but they were murderers in advance, from the Lord's standpoint, because hatred of him was in their hearts; "And he that hateth his brother is a murderer." They had, however, respect to the outward forms of the Law, and sought any pretext to justify them in killing their opponent. Had they no fear of God! Apparently it is possible for men to get into such a condition of heart that they will not only speak evil of us and plot mischief against us, but to the extent that they can do so will be glad to effect our death. This is a part of the murderous spirit, whether they stop short of the actual death or not. It went to the limit with Stephen and with our Lord, and it may do so with us some day. Let us be on the side of the martyr rather than on the side of those whose wrong condition of heart our Lord explained, saying, "Satan hath filled thine heart."

Stephen's opponents were crafty. They hired witnesses to describe the teachings of Stephen in an unjust manner, saying he talked dishonorably of the Law and of Moses. Blasphemy in that day was the worst of crimes. As a result the people, the Elders, the scribes came upon him, seized upon him and brought him to the Council, or place of trial. Then the prejudices of the people were again appealed to through witnesses who perverted

the truth, saying that Stephen was continually saying things against the holy city and temple and the Law and claiming that Jesus would destroy the place and change the customs. There was, perhaps, considerable truth in this statement, rightly understood. But as it was stated it was untrue; and so today in traducing us, some may tell partial truths, which really are falsehoods. It is weakness of human nature to suppose that such misrepresentations are excusable. They should remember how impossible it is to lie to the holy Spirit, as Ananias and Sapphira learned. The lesson to the Lord's faithful is that it is far better to be the sufferer under such circumstances than to be the one who causes the suffering and who must eventually answer for his crime.

"AS THE FACE OF AN ANGEL"

There is an inspiration of the heart and an illumination of the features which accompanies the presentation of the Truth by those who are indwelt by the Lord's holy Spirit and who are speaking as his ambassadors. Many have noticed this peculiarity amongst those who are now rejoicing in what we designate "Present Truth." Doubtless this is akin to what is mentioned in our lesson respecting Stephen's face – that it was bright, happy, radiant "as the face of an angel." Ah! Stephen was an angel. An angel is a messenger, and if Stephen, by the grace of God, was permitted to be the Divine messenger or mouth-piece and permitted to convey the "good tidings" to others, surely, then, we also are angels in the highest sense conceivable. No wonder there is no need since Pentecost that the angels should appear in human form! The sons of God, indwelt by his Spirit, can be God's mouthpieces in the very highest sense.

Stephen's sermon is not directly a part of our lesson, but indirectly it should be borne in mind. It was a comprehensive view of Divine favor in Israel, bringing the matter down to date and showing Jesus the son of Abraham, according to the flesh, rejected and crucified by those who should have received him. This was the galling feature of the Gospel amongst the Jews – their responsibility as murderers of their Messiah. We read that his hearers

"GNASHED ON HIM WITH THEIR TEETH"

This signifies chagrin, disappointment, savage animosity. We read that they were "cut to the heart." Stephen's words were sharp and their force consisted not in any angry or bitter denunciation, but in plain, simple narration of the Truth. This should be the style of all preaching. It is not necessary for us to say angry or bitter things. The Truth itself is "sharper than any two-edged sword," and needs no unkind language, no profanity, no epithets to drive it home. Where immoderate and unchristian language is considered necessary it is a sure sign that the argument is correspondingly weak, and it warns us to beware. The Truth itself is mighty, even if spoken by a little child.

Hearing Stephen with impatience, aggravated by the fact that his argument was true, they were gnashing their teeth with chagrin, because they were unable to detect a flaw or excuse for his death.

Finally, however, when he declared that he saw a vision of Christ at the right hand of God (whether he actually saw such a vision or merely pictured it before his hearers, we do not know), his statement of the matter furnished the excuse they had been waiting for, and, seizing it, they rushed upon him, crying out in a loud voice and stopping their ears, as though to convince one another that to willingly hear anything more on that line would be a participation in the blasphemy. They rushed him out of the city gate and stoned him. A young man, Saul, supposedly an officer of the Council, being present, gave his sanction by taking charge of the outer-garments of those who stoned him to death.

Such a martyrdom is not the style in our day; hence none of us will probably suffer death in that form. We have more refined forms

of persecution. Christian people may get themselves into such a wrong attitude of heart as to think that they do God service in hurling slanders at those who have sought to do them good. And indeed who does not know that the blow of slander may be even more cruel and even more painful and more shameful than the literal stoning? Yet, strange to say, there are many who would read the account of Stephen's stoning, or Jesus' crucifixion, and who would roundly condemn all who took part in either, and who, nevertheless, would either unthinkingly or under supposition of doing God service engage in the worst form of persecution – stoning and crucifying and spearing with their tongues. We ask ourselves what was the matter with those Jews who thus maltreated our Lord and Stephen, and the answer comes back, "Ye have not the love of God in your hearts." Similarly we must answer in respect to those who in our day persecute through slander, vituperation, evil-speaking, evil-surmisings, evil-insinuations, etc.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

Stephen's attitude of heart towards his enemies indicates that he had not only received the holy Spirit as a gift, but that he had it as a living power, and that its fruitage was in his heart. He had only love for his enemies. Having done his very best to serve them with the Truth, he had prayers for them in return for their imprecations and their cruel stones. He prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." But it was not for Stephen to direct Divine justice as to what should be the reward of those who stoned him. We cannot suppose that he was attempting to direct the arm of the Infinite. We must assume that he was speaking merely for himself; that, so far as he himself was concerned, he had no desire that they should be punished. This beautiful condition of heart should be ours. "Owe no man anything but to love one another" – and to desire one another's welfare is the application of the Divine rule to all the affairs of our lives.

We read that Saul (afterwards Paul) was amongst those who consented to this martyrdom. How strange the anomaly – that so many should think right and the Divine service that which we know was very reprehensible in the sight of God! Seeing such great blindness on the part of one who subsequently declared, "I verily thought I did God service," should surely cause us to be very circumspect, very critical, in respect to our thoughts and deeds. We must remember that it is not a question of whose servants we claim to be, but, as our Lord said, "His servants ye are unto whom ye render service."

THEN STEPHEN FELL ASLEEP

No suggestion was given that the first Christian martyr passed immediately to heaven, and that with his expiring breath he became more alive than he ever was when he was alive. On the contrary, here as elsewhere in the Scriptures, death is pictured as a sleep.

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep."

How glad we are that this is so! The awakening time will be after the close of the reign of sin and death; after our Redeemer's Second Advent, when the power Divine will be in control, as instead of that of the prince of this world. Truly, "Weeping may endure for the night," but it ceases with our sleeping, and "joy cometh in the morning" of the resurrection. – Psa. 30:5.

"THEY WERE ALL SCATTERED ABROAD"

The death of Stephen marked the beginning of an epoch of persecution, especially in Jerusalem, where for some years peace had prevailed and the message of the Gospel found considerable root in the hearts of "Israelites indeed." The Lord allowed these new beginners to attain a fair degree of development in grace and knowledge, and then permitted the persecution which scattered them everywhere throughout Judea and Samaria. The effect was that, so far from the Truth being injured,

it was carried to larger numbers, for every true disciple is a light-bearer. Saul was one of the chief persecutors, apparently. We read that he made havoc of the Church, entering every house, and, armed with the necessary legal authority, he effected the imprisonment of many, and thus led to the scattering of others. But in some unaccountable manner this persecution seems to have passed by the apostles. The Lord probably wished to keep Jerusalem as the center for the Apostolic ambassadors of the Truth for a season.

The lesson for us all is faith, courage, zeal, a loyal heart, a shining face, love and prayers for our enemies, and to see that we learn a lesson from the evil course of others, "See that no man render evil in return for evil," as the Apostle says.

The fact that the Jews had not power to put our Lord to death, but did have the power to stone Stephen, is explained by the fact that stoning to death for blasphemy was the Divinely instituted punishment, according to the Law. But the Jews, being subject to the Romans, were not permitted by them to exercise the death penalty. Following the death of our Lord, Pilate was ordered to Rome to stand trial on certain charges brought against him and thus the Roman power in Palestine was somewhat abated, and the Jews, in the absence of a dominating force, exercised their own laws.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR – R. 5857

ACTS 6:9 – 8:3

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." – Revelation 2:10

STRICTLY speaking, our Lord Jesus was the first Christian martyr; but the first of His followers to endure death because of loyalty in preaching the Gospel of Jesus was St. Stephen, one of the seven elected Deacons, appointed to the distribution of the Church's charities. The Apostles had sought to give themselves entirely to the Master's work, and doubtless expected little of special service from the Deacons appointed. Nevertheless, by God's providence one of these, Stephen, because of his love and zeal was given much of the Lord's grace and blessing and permitted to lay down his life faithfully for the Truth.

Seemingly St. Stephen was a man of great power and a lover of the Truth. His choice as one of these special Deacons indicates that those who knew him best highly estimated his purity of character and life. His eloquence in defense of the Master and His Gospel is well evidenced by this lesson.

History says that at that time there were four hundred and sixty synagogues in Jerusalem. Some of these were Hebraic; that is, those attending worship there were accustomed to the Hebrew tongue, and it was used in these. Others of the synagogues were called Hellenist; that is to say, Greek. The Greek was the cultured language of that time in the outside world; and some Jews and proselytes living in outside places and in Jerusalem preferred to have the books of the Law and the Prophets in the Greek language.

It is supposed that St. Stephen had been attached to one of these synagogues, and that this fact accounted for his going thither to urge upon his associates the message that Jesus was the Messiah. It has been assumed, with apparently good reason, that Saul of Tarsus attended the same synagogue; and that he was one of the disputants over whom St. Stephen, by the Lord's grace, seemed to have

an advantage in these debates. Thus a bitter feeling was aroused.

It seemed to the Jewish rulers that this message respecting Jesus as the Messiah and a Jewish responsibility for His death, and respecting God's favor in raising Him from the dead, was a gross error which, being set before the people in masterly fashion, was likely to arouse a spirit of resentment against the rulers of the Jews and to be subversive of all law and government in Palestine. Indeed, these Christians claimed that because of this rejection of Jesus the Jewish nation had been rejected from God's favor, and that dire calamities were coming. Those committed to the old order of things refused to believe these prophecies of coming disaster.

St. Stephen's second battle was the one which preceded his death. The Sanhedrin, angry against him, suborned witnesses; that is to say, they bribed certain men to make complaint, charging St. Stephen with having blasphemed – with having declared Moses and the Law obsolete, with declaring that the Temple was no longer God's Temple. These witnesses put together certain isolated sayings of St. Stephen, which thus patched up, made the Truth to appear false and blasphemous. So it is with any matter. The form in which a statement is made has much to do with the impression which it makes. St. Stephen had said the very things that they charged; but by putting his statements together as they did, they misrepresented the essence of his teaching.

ST. STEPHEN'S DEFENSE

After these paid witnesses had given their testimony before the Sanhedrin, charging blasphemy – the penalty for which was death by stoning – the Sanhedrin, with a show of fairness, permitted St. Stephen to reply in his own defense. This he did in a masterly way, by taking up the thread of Jewish history and reciting it, showing his implicit faith in God's dealings with Abraham and in the promises there made. In orderly manner he brought the thought of his hearers down to the time of Moses and the giving of the Law, and reminded them that Moses had said that in due time God would raise up a greater Prophet than he. (Deuteronomy 18:18,19.) This great Prophet, St. Stephen allowed them to infer, was Jesus; and since Moses had particularly referred to Jesus thus as greater, it could be no disloyalty to Moses now to accept that greater Prophet. Thus one feature of the charge against St. Stephen was overthrown. He was not disloyal to Moses, but contrariwise.

As for the Temple, St. Stephen reminded his hearers that God first established the Tabernacle in the wilderness; and that by and by, in its stead, God provided the Temple at Jerusalem. It was no disrespect to the Tabernacle for them to believe in the Temple that Solomon built. God had now provided that a still higher Temple should take the place of the building made with hands. The higher Temple was the spiritual one, to be composed of the people of God who, as living stones, would be builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. As it was not blasphemy to accept the Temple of Solomon instead of the Tabernacle of Moses, neither should it be considered blasphemous to accept this higher, spiritual Temple, of which Jesus is the Head, or Foundation, instead of the typical Temple, built of wood and stone.

VICTORY IN DEATH!

So able, so logical, so convincing, were the words of St. Stephen that his hearers "were cut to the heart," not in a penitent sense, but with a realization that their cause was coming out second best. It is assumed that Saul of Tarsus was a member of that Sanhedrin. They no longer had any hope of justly charging St. Stephen with blasphemy. Their only hope now was that they could fasten upon something that he would say as being blasphemous, and on the spot rush him to his death.

The moment came. St. Stephen, full of his

subject, preaching Christ and the blessings yet to come through Him upon Israel and the world, was radiant in face – like an angel of the Lord. And looking up toward Heaven he exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!" This was the signal for the Sanhedrin to raise a cry of blasphemy and rush upon God's messenger.

Just what he did mean by those words, we may not too surely say. Remembering that our best sight is with the eyes of our understanding, we might use the same words – not referring to anything seen by our natural sight, but merely to our mental view and our positiveness of its truth. Thus a blind man, catching the point of an argument, might truthfully say, "Oh, yes, I see now!"

We may be sure that a mob was ready to follow the suggestion of the Sanhedrin. Mobs now, as then, seem ready for any kind of violence if they have a leader and a pretext, especially if the pretext and the leadership be along religious lines and from those recognized as authorities. There is in the fallen nature a ferocious, bestial disposition which seems blood-thirsty and only awaiting opportunity.

Pushing the minister of Jesus outside of their gates – for no execution was allowed on the inside – the crowd threw their clothing at the feet of the young man Saul of Tarsus. Thus he became their authority for the stoning. Then they stoned Stephen to death, he crying at the time, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" – my life – and also, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" This was St. Stephen's climax of victory – faithfulness unto death, and, withal, the loving spirit in which he received death through his enemies – the spirit of the Master, the same spirit which we should cultivate and manifest.

HEROISM IN THE TRENCHES

St. Stephen has set us an example. Indeed, examples are not difficult to find, showing what manner of persons we ought to be. The difficulty seems to be that none but those of fervent spirit and well instructed of the Lord profit by the examples. For instance, the world is today giving the Church a wonderful lesson in respect to faithfulness unto death. When the followers of Jesus look across the water and behold millions of men leaving home, family, business, pleasure and every consideration to obey the rulers of their lands – to go into the trenches and suffer the hardships and exposure and wounds and death, it seems truly marvelous.

We say to ourselves, "What manner of persons ought we Christians to be!" We have not been called to kill our fellowmen, but to do them good. We have not been called for a few cents per day of wage or possibly an iron cross or a name on some roll of honor, but have been promised glory, honor, immortality, joint-heirship with our Lord in His Kingdom. Moreover, ours is not only the privilege of helping men now instead of destroying them, but the blessed privilege also of helping them in the coming Age, from imperfections up to the image and likeness of God. Oh, what manner of persons ought we Christians to be! How faithful, how loyal!

Our Golden Text is impressive. Our enlistment is not for a few days, but undertaken with a full understanding that in order to gain the great prize we must lay down our lives in the Lord's service – faithfully, loyally. How many Christians have rightly understood what was signified by consecration of their heart to the Lord and by taking up their cross to be His followers through evil report or through good report? It is not too late yet to learn our lessons more thoroughly and to determine that by the grace of God we will be faithful unto death to Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

STEPHEN'S DEFENCE AND EXECUTION – R. 2957

ACTS 7:54-8:2

"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." – Matthew 5:44

STEPHEN'S defence before the Sanhedrin Court turned out to be a defence of the truth, rather than of himself. Full of zeal for the Lord and for a proper use of his privileges as a minister of the truth, Stephen was courageous – seemingly to the extent of ignoring all thought of personal safety. His defence is not part of this lesson, but it is, nevertheless, worthy of consideration. It displays a clear insight into the past history of his people, and a clear appreciation of the lessons inculcated through their experiences. In a word, it gives evidence that Stephen was a Bible student – "a workman who needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Stephen in all this was a worthy example to the Lord's flock, the lesson still being appropriate. With us also the first thought should be the privilege of serving the truth, and if the will of God be such, the privilege of laying down life, even, in its service. A full consecration to the Lord on our part, and a keen appreciation of the truths of the Scripture, will ultimately make us courageous – not careful for the present life when weighed in the balances with the interests of the Lord's cause. But now, as in Stephen's day, such courage can only come from a knowledge of the divine plan, and the knowledge can only come through a right ***dividing*** of the word of truth; – and such abilities imply a devotion of time and energy to the study of truth, and the guidance of the holy spirit in the understanding of it.

The charge against Stephen was blasphemy against the holy place, Jerusalem (and especially its holy Temple, which sanctified it), and against the law of Moses. Passing by the charges, Stephen went into a history of the Lord's leading of Israel from the time of Abraham down to his own time; and thus showed his full faith in the holy places and in the promises and presence of God, which made them holy. His familiarity with the facts, and the reverent manner in which he stated them, and the conclusions which he drew from them, must have shown his judges clearly that so far from being a blasphemer of Moses and his institutions and holy things, he was a firm believer in these, and a zealous advocate of them. So with us: when discussing holy things there may at times be those who, intentionally or ignorantly, will attribute to us evil conditions or evil motives. With us, as with Stephen, the best manner of dealing with such charges is to show, without ostentation, and by deeply reverent manner, that we are trusting implicitly in the gracious promises of God, and that we appreciate fully his various providential leadings and dealings in the past, not only as respects ourselves, but with all his holy people. Now, as in Stephen's case, the best answer respecting our fidelity to the holy things is represented in our knowledge of them, and in the reverent manner in which we mention them.

Stephen rehearsed to his hearers the fact that Moses, the great Law-giver, whom they now reverenced, had at one time been rejected by Israel, saying, "Who made thee a judge or a ruler over us?" But he was God's agent and representative, and hence, in due time, he became Israel's deliverer. He reminded them also that Moses had said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me." The lesson which Stephen desired his hearers to draw is, that as Moses was rejected at his first offering to the Israelites so the one like unto Moses would, like him, be rejected – had been rejected, in the person of Jesus. Nevertheless, as Moses subsequently became the leader and commander of the people, and delivered them, so also Jesus would in due time become the great deliverer of his people, – at his second advent. He pointed further to the fact that the prophets all down through the Jewish age had

been refused by the people in the time of their presence and ministry with them, many of them being foully dealt with; but nevertheless subsequently they were discerned to have been the Lord's representatives. Stephen would have his hearers recognize Christ as the great prophet, whom God had set forth to be the instructor of the people. We see no attempt to defend himself, except by showing up the truth. He evidently relied upon his course of conduct and teaching corroborating the history which he was now delineating. Let us also, in our intercourse with others whom we would lead into the truth, pay less attention to self-defence than to a presentation of the divine Word. As the Apostle declares, the sword of the spirit, the Word of God, is sharper than any two-edged sword. – Heb. 4:12.

About this time, apparently, some manifestation of impatience on the part of the Court caused Stephen to hasten to his conclusions abruptly, saying, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the holy spirit; as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the dispensation of angels, and have not kept it." (Vss. 51-53.) It is not necessary to suppose that these simple, true words were uttered in any harsh tone or strifeful manner; for everything about Stephen's attitude seems to imply gentleness, forbearance, love. It was the truth, and it was the right time to tell it. He evidently knew what was likely to be the result anyway, and wished to give his testimony, that as those who had foretold the just one had been killed it was no more remarkable that those who afterward bore witness to him should be killed also.

His persecutors were thwarted; their attempt to traduce him and show him an enemy of the Lord, of the nation, and of the law, had abundantly failed. He stood before the Sanhedrin a great teacher, reproving them, and showing from their own Scriptural records that they were now intent on doing toward him as their fathers had done toward the Lord's faithful in every age. His hearers were "cut to the heart." This expression reminds us of the record (Acts 2:37) of those who heard Peter preach on the same theme – they were "pricked to the heart." But people can be pricked to the heart, and yet have very different results follow. Much will depend upon what is in the heart when it is pricked. If it be good the results will be good; if it be evil the results will be evil. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, and the course of action is guided. These men were in a wicked condition of heart, and the truths uttered by Stephen were to them stings, rebukes, arousing their hatred to a pitch of frenzy – "they gnashed on him with their teeth."

Undaunted by their manifestations of hatred and malice, Stephen was so filled with an appreciation of the Lord's goodness, and of his being a servant of the truth, that he was all aglow with interest in his theme, and his face illuminated with an angelic expression, such as the truth only can impart. It was then that looking away from his own surroundings – away from his enemies' faces – he was granted a glimpse of the Lord at the right hand of the Father. Whether it was a mental vision, such as any of us can awaken in our minds, such as the Apostle referred to when he said that we should be continually "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," or whether it was actually a vision granted to Stephen at this particular time, we know not; – most probably it was a vision.

He of course did not see in reality what he described, as that would be an impossibility; – "No man hath seen God at any time," and the Only Begotten of the Father is now the express image of his person, and he also would be invisible to humanity; even the light of his glory would have smitten Stephen down, as it smote Saul of Tarsus a short time afterward. But that Stephen should have had a vision or revelation of his Master and his

high exaltation is entirely reasonable; he told what he saw, and this furnished the occasion of his death. His adversaries could have found nothing against him in anything he had said, or that any witness could have proved, but now, affecting great indignation at the thought that Jesus, whom they had crucified, Jesus the imposter, had become exalted to heavenly glory, next to Jehovah himself – this furnished an opportunity for the claim that Stephen was a blasphemer, and therefore ought to be stoned to death. All being in a wrong attitude of heart, the same impulse affected all, and they rushed upon the faithful servant of the truth, pushing him out of the city to a secluded spot, where they stoned him to death. Let us likewise be faithful to the Lord, and we also shall have revelations of our Lord's glory – not, probably, visions or dreams, but such mental pictures as are clearly delineated before us in God's Word, which now is commonly in the hands of his people; and under the leadings of the holy spirit reveals to us the deep things of God which human eyes have not seen nor ears heard. – 1 Cor. 2:10,13.

The stoning of Stephen would seem to have been a violation of the Roman law. The Mosaic law, indeed, commanded stoning as a penalty for blasphemy; but from the time the Romans took possession of the country they seem to have decreed that life could not be taken in any legal form except that of the Roman law; but Stephen's enemies were so enraged that they were evidently willing to risk some personal injury rather than be defeated in their purpose of destroying their enemy, whom they could not match with Scripture or logic.

The Lord's servants to day are in no particular danger of being stoned to death after the same manner; but the majority of them have had experiences, nevertheless, which in many respects correspond. False representations, anger, malice, hatred, strife, etc., hurled against the Lord's people, are often hard to bear; and yet all those who receive such figurative stoning in the same manner that Stephen received his literal stoning, are sure to be greatly blessed. They find that although such experiences are severe as respects the flesh, they are nevertheless helpful, profitable, as respects the new nature. They thus demonstrate the truth of the Apostle's statement, "The outward man perisheth, but the inward man is renewed day by day," – by just such experiences rightly received.

It is here that attention is drawn to the fact that Saul of Tarsus was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, which tried Stephen, and surely one of those who consented to his death; – standing guard over the outer garments of those who executed the will of the Sanhedrin, in doing the actual stoning. He refers to the matter himself subsequently, in contrite language. (Acts 22:20.) Let us have hope, therefore, that some of those who today assault us, because of loyalty to the Lord and his Word, may yet be amongst those who will penitently acknowledge the error of their ways. Indeed, a number of instances of this kind have occurred; a number of those who are now deeply interested in present truth at one time were so bitterly opposed that they burned the publications which represent these truths, and gloried in the deed. It shows us, too, how God looks at the heart, and teaches us that some who are not bad at heart may at times be so blinded by prejudice that light appears darkness to them and darkness light.

Stephen's attitude in receiving his persecution was most noble. He prayed for himself and for his enemies – that the latter might be forgiven, so far as he was concerned; – they will have enough to answer for and to receive "stripes" or just retribution. For himself, that the Lord would receive his spirit. There has been some query as to what would be implied in this expression, "Receive my spirit." We have already shown* that the primary sense of the word spirit is energy or "life," and that the spirit, energy or life, of all flesh was forfeited through sin; but that believers, recognizing the fact that Christ has died for our sins, recognizing the fact also that whosoever accepts Christ, as his Redeemer, receives through him a new

right to life – that to such the spirit of life is no longer reckoned as forfeited, but reckoned as being restored to them again, – and that unto eternal life, if they are faithful. Not that Christians are privileged to retain their hold upon the spirit of life now, and thus avoid dying, but that God has promised us, through his Word, that he who has the Son has life – has received back again by faith through him a future right to life, to be fully attained through a resurrection. Nevertheless, it is explained to us that "our life is hid with Christ in God," and will not be ours until "he who is our life shall appear" at his Second advent, – and grant, according to the Father's plan, new or resurrection bodies to his people. (Col. 3:3,4.) Stephen meant to express to the Lord his confidence, his trust, in a future life through a resurrection, when he made this expression, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" – receive my life, preserve my life, that it may be granted to me again in the resurrection, according to thy gracious promise: I commit my all to thee, in hope.

* MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. V., Chap. 13.

Stephen's attitude under persecution may well commend itself to us: our love for the Lord and our benevolent sympathy with all the gracious features of his plan should lift us above any and everything like vindictiveness or spitefulness against our enemies; and should permit us to see that their mistreatment of us, is largely because they are blind to the truth. They know not us, even as they knew not the Lord; and, as he said, if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, and said all manner of evil against him falsely, we must not be surprised if the same should be our lot. We know, therefore, to count it all joy when we fall into such matters; and should rejoice that we are counted worthy of a share with the Lord in the trials and difficulties of this present time, that in due time we may be made partakers also of the glory to follow. With us also the one thought should be the pleasing of our Lord and the attainment, through him, of the life everlasting – having him to care for our spirit of life, and to revive us again in the resurrection in due time.

"HE FELL ASLEEP"

In the midst of his prayer he fell asleep – he died. Commenting on these words an "orthodox" writer says: "Tho the pagan authors sometimes used ***sleep*** to signify ***death***, it was only a poetic figure. When Christ, on the other hand, said, 'Our friend, Lazarus, ***sleepeth***,' he used the word, not as a figure but as an expression of a fact. In that mystery of death in which the pagan saw only nothingness, Jesus saw continued life, rest, waking – the elements which enter into sleep. And thus in Christian speech and thought, as the doctrine of the resurrection struck its roots deeper, the word 'dead,' with its hopeless finality, gave place to the more gracious and hopeful word, 'sleep.' The pagans' burying place carried in its name no suggestion of hope or comfort. It was a burying place, a hiding place, monumentum, a mere memorial of something gone; . . . but the Christian thought of death as sleep brought with it, in the Christian speech, the kindred thought of a chamber of rest, and embodied it in the word cemetery – "***the place to lie down to sleep***" – ***Word Studies***.

Throughout the Scriptures the word "sleep" is frequently used as a synonym for death – but only in view of the hoped-for awakening – the resurrection. It was because Abraham and his posterity believed God that he was able to raise them up from the dead, and that his agreement so to do was implied in the promise that all the families of the earth should be blessed, that it was impossible for them to think of their departed ones as being totally ***extinct*** in death; – from that time onward sleep, as a synonym of death, became common amongst those who waited for the consolation of Israel. And in New Testament times, in harmony with our Lord's declaration, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," and again, "Lazarus sleepeth," etc., we have the term sleep commonly used amongst the followers of Jesus in the various New Testament writings. (See Matt. 9:24;

John 11:11.) Many, however, who use the term sleep, and who place it upon the tombstones in their cemeteries, overlook entirely the fact that it implies that the sleeping one is unconscious, that he will not be conscious until the waking time, the resurrection. The figure is a beautiful one, viewed from the right standpoint, the standpoint of divine revelation, which shows us the blessings of mankind, restitution, which are to be expected as soon as the morning of the new Millennial day shall have been fully ushered in.

Doubtless there were many who considered the martyrdom of Stephen a great calamity to the Church, a great loss of influence; a cutting off of one of the ablest exponents of the gospel. But we are not sure that they took a correct view. Viewed from God's standpoint, quite possibly the testimony which Stephen gave at the close of his life was a most beneficial one; first in its influence upon the believers, in teaching them by precept and example faithfulness, even unto death; and that the Lord's people could die as they lived, – joyful through the faith that is in Christ. His death also probably bore a valuable witness to some of his enemies. Quite possibly the Apostle Paul's first favorable impressions toward Christianity were received through his witness of the courage and zeal of this noble martyr, – whose spirit of Christ he doubtless witnessed in others of the hated "sect, everywhere spoken against."

So with us; we know not which act in life may glorify the Lord most, or whether our living or dying would be most helpful to his cause. We are to leave this in the Lord's hands, and to remember that our course in any event must be one of faithfulness, and that if faithful nothing can by any means harm us, but all things must work together for our good.

INDIVIDUAL CLAIMS FOR RETRIBUTION – R. 5259

"Lay not this sin to their charge." – Acts 7:60

THE words of St. Stephen on the occasion of his martyrdom, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," must not be understood to mean that he was in any way dictating to the Almighty how to deal with those who were taking his life. Nor are we to think that he was praying for the forgiveness of all the sins of these people. We are to narrow the matter down to the words used – "Lay not to their charge."

So far as St. Stephen was concerned, he had no special claim to make upon Justice for retribution. The question then arises, has any one such a claim? The answer is that it would seem that any one who suffers injustice has a claim for retribution. In our common courts, there are some crimes and acts of injustice which are taken up for consideration, though there are others which would never be touched, unless the individual concerned took up a charge.

In St. Stephen's case, we understand that the wrongs done him are charged up against the wrong-doers. They were already tainted with original sin, as members of the human family; they were already under condemnation to death. The Lord Jesus had already begun the work of making satisfaction for their sins and for the sins of the whole world. In His own time and way, God will judge these sinners. Hence they shall have a just recompense, in proportion as they were guilty of wrong-doing.

Jesus intimates that crimes against any of the members of His Body will have to be expiated. The doing of injury to one of the Lord's people is especially evil in God's sight, and especially

punishable; for these are in special covenant relationship with Him, while the world is outside of this protection of Divine Justice, except in a general way.

The words attributed to our Lord, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," given in our Common Version Bible, are not found in the oldest Greek MSS. It would be rather more difficult for Jesus to offer such a prayer than for us to do so; for the Scriptures declare that He knew what was in man. We do not know. Any prayer that we might offer respecting man would be very different from what Jesus would offer. Therefore, we must leave these words out of consideration when thinking of St. Stephen's words.

GENERAL AND SPECIAL RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW

We ask ourselves, to what extent was St. Stephen right and within his privileges in offering such a prayer? If he were one of the Apostles, we should be bound not to make inquiry, but to suppose that he was right. The fact that the words are recorded in Scripture does not prove anything more than if they were from one of us.

In our Common Law, there seems to be this principle – each individual seems to have certain rights in addition to the general rights under the Law. These special rights he may or may not press, if occasion should arise. In St. Stephen's case, we understand that he had a right to waive the claims of Justice, and did so. It is as though he had said, "I put in no protest, and ask for no vengeance on my account."

The question then arises, did he have a right to wish for vengeance on them? We think not. Our Lord's instructions are, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:36.) But so far as the general principles of righteousness are concerned, we must not interfere. St. Stephen very properly limits his prayer in this sense, as if he were saying (paraphrasing), "Heavenly Father, I am not asking for vengeance on them, but that they may not be held especially responsible for this sin against me."

DEFENSE OF THE INTERESTS OF THE TRUTH A DUTY

We are admonished by our Lord to love our enemies, and to do good to them who hate us, and to pray for them who despitefully use us and persecute us. The question then comes in, Would it ever be right for us to appeal to Justice? Should we always say, "Father, forgive them; I forgive them"? Should we wish that the ***courts*** should do nothing against them? No! Where the interests of the Lord's Cause are involved, it is our duty to say something in defense of the Truth; but not in a personal matter.

Of course, the world will not understand our motive, for the world does not act except for personal reasons. Consequently, they would suppose that we acted for our own sakes. But we have given up all our earthly rights, in consecration; that is, we covenanted to give up every claim to our just rights in the world. This is the substance of our consecration.

Where the interests of the Lord's Cause are involved, however, it is our duty to act for the good of the Truth, for the reason that certain impressions inimical to the Truth may be stopped. We see illustrations of this principle in the case of the Apostle Paul at court; also when he said to Elymas the sorcerer, "O thou child of the Devil, . . . wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? . . . thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." (Acts 13:10,11.) In these cases, and also in that of Alexander the coppersmith, we may be sure that the Apostle was not seeking personal revenge.

This attitude should also be ours in all the affairs of life. If anything is done in opposition to those who oppose themselves, it should be done in the same spirit that the Apostle showed

in the course which he took. We all find that as we grow in grace and in knowledge we develop a spirit of charity – forgiveness. This is as it should be. Greater knowledge of God, greater development in character-likeness of Christ, should make us the more generous, forgiving.

IGNORANCE THE REAL CAUSE OF MUCH INJUSTICE

The Lord blesses us in giving us a clearer knowledge of the Truth. When we come to the knowledge of the Truth, it gives us a sympathetic feeling for the world. We are all fallen. But the Apostle says, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11.) Others, who are not cleansed, not sanctified, not justified, are in the gall of bitterness, so to speak.

When we consider all the evil deeds done in the world, and when we look back through the pages of history, we can see that the majority of those who perpetrated evil did so because they did not appreciate the principles involved in the matter. St. Peter, speaking by inspiration, says that in ignorance Israel killed the Prince of Life. (Acts 3:15,17.) St. Paul, who gave the authority of the Sanhedrin for the stoning of St. Stephen, tells us that he did these things in ignorance, in blindness; and that he verily thought that he was doing God service.

If this was true of all these cases in the past, may we not think that quite certainly the same principle is operating now – individually, personally? The Lord is able to stop these things, and will do so in due time. He will lift the veil and let the light shine out in due time. But it is not the due time as yet. The Church has not yet completed the sufferings of Christ.

OUR SHARE OF THE CUP OF SUFFERING

We should rejoice in having a share in the sufferings of Christ, and should receive our share in meekness and uncomplaining obedience, realizing that the Father hath poured the cup which we are to drink. If we love our enemies and do not wish to do them harm, but on the contrary wish to open the eyes of their understanding and to do them good, then we have the right spirit. Any desire to do them injury would prove that we are lacking in the Lord's Spirit. Whoever finds that he has a spirit of viciousness will find that he has much to learn. But whoever finds in himself evidence of the Spirit of the Lord in this matter, may rejoice.

By and by, these very ones who are persecuting, slandering, doing evil towards us, will see clearly, and they will be ashamed. As the Scriptures say, "Your brethren that hated you and cast you out for My Name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." (Isa. 66:5.) The time when they shall be ashamed is the time when Christ shall appear and they shall see. "And when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." So, then, our opportunity for revenge will be future, and our revenge will be to do our enemies good. We will do them so much good that they will be thoroughly ashamed of what they are now doing against us.

Revival in Samaria under Philip

And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Acts 8:6

PERSECUTION OVERRULED FOR GOOD – R. 2109

ACTS 8:1-17

"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." – Acts 8:4

THE tendency of the early believers, as we have seen, was to gather together – to swarm. This was evidently in harmony with the divine program, to foster and establish the Church in the religious capital of the world. Those first few years were evidently designed of the Lord to permit the Church to put on the armor of God, to grow from babes in Christ, by the use of the sincere milk of the Word, and afterward by its strong meat, up to the stature of Christian manhood; – thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work. This gathering at Jerusalem was in harmony with our Lord's direction before his ascension, when, after instructing them to preach the gospel, he added "beginning at Jerusalem." But now Jerusalem, having had its full period of favor, the Church having been rooted and established, the divine plan led on to a wider work; and the persecution which arose at the time of Stephen's martyrdom became very general in the city of Jerusalem, and very grievous, and led to the flight of many of the faithful who, we are told, went everywhere – especially throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. The apostles no doubt considered it a part of duty that they should remain at Jerusalem as a kind of center of influence; partly because they had not yet fully learned the lesson that the gospel they preached, although to the Jew first, is also to the Greek and the whole world.

(3) Saul of Tarsus was an energetic man, on whichever side of a question he stood. When an opponent of the Lord Jesus and his Church and gospel, he was its most active enemy, and we cannot doubt that his activity in the matter was backed, as he himself afterward declared, by a "good conscience," which believed that he "verily did God service" in opposing what he considered to be the sect of the Nazarene. God seems to be specially on the lookout for just such earnest characters, and they are far more certain to get the truth than are the cold, listless and indifferent kind who neither love nor hate either righteousness or sin. Peter and James and John were of this positive and strong character, and they with the Apostle Paul, consequently, were the ones most freely used by our Lord in conveying the blessings of the gospel to us and to the world.

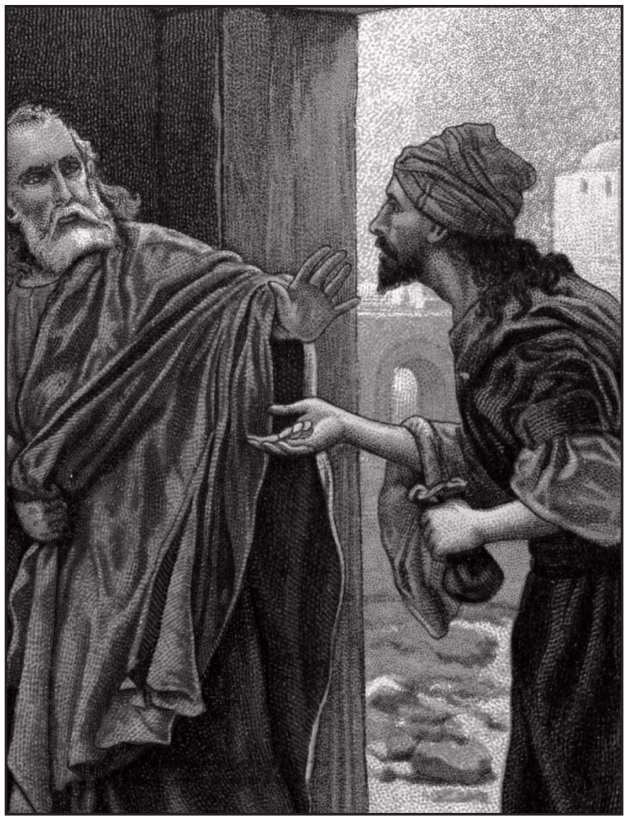
(4-13) It will be noticed that in the primitive Church there was no such distinction of class as there is in the nominal church to-day. There was no division into clergy and laity, but they were "all one in Christ Jesus." The division of the church into clergy and laity took place when the great falling away came, which developed into Papacy; and from that baneful influence many have not yet fully escaped. All of the early Church were preachers, and if persecuted they went everywhere preaching the Word. An instance is given respecting this preaching. One, Philip – not the Apostle – did successful work in a city of Samaria and was used of the Lord in casting out devils and healing the sick, the means then in use for drawing attention to the gospel. The results of his preaching were marvelous – even Simon the sorcerer became a believer.

Sorcery, witchcraft and enchantments of olden times were manifestations of Satan and demons for the delusion of mankind, and were strictly forbidden under the Mosaic law. The same evil spirits in more recent years have slightly altered the character of the demonstrations, and so-called Spiritualists are their "mediums." The change is merely made in conformity to the changed conditions, and both are to be reckoned amongst "the works of the flesh and the devil." There can be no fellowship between the power of the adversary working in his agents for witchcraft and Spiritism and the power of Christ working in his agents and representatives and through the Word of truth. The two are in opposition, however much at times the evil may claim

relationship to the good. So it was in Samaria, as related in this lesson: the gospel opposed the doctrines of devils propagated through witchcraft and sorcery, the effect was to make the people free, and even Simon the medium was convicted and professed outwardly a conversion and was baptised.

Philip's discourse is but briefly outlined, but it was along the same lines as the discourses of the apostles noticed in the previous lessons. He preached the "things concerning the Kingdom of God." How fully he explained these things – that the Kingdom would be a spiritual Kingdom, that flesh and blood could not enter it or even see it, and that not the Jewish nation would be heirs of that Kingdom with Messiah, but only such as become believers in Jesus, devoted to him and suffer with him, thus attesting their loyalty to the divine plan. We cannot doubt, however, that Philip preached the second coming of Messiah to establish and exalt with himself the Kingdom heirs now being sought out, and subsequently through that Kingdom, to bless the world of mankind. We cannot doubt that he urged them to believe in Christ, and by a consecration to him to become joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom, if so be that they suffered with him, that they might also reign with him. Nor did his preaching omit the things pertaining to "the name of Jesus Christ," and connecting his name as Messiah with all the Kingdom hopes which were before the Jewish mind. We doubt not that he pointed out to them that the names of Moses and of Abraham and of the prophets, although great, were insufficient for salvation – that there is none other name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved.

(14-17) It is worthy of note that Philip the evangelist, although possessed of the holy spirit and possessed also of certain gifts of the spirit, did not possess the power to communicate such gifts to others. Evidently that power resided only in the twelve apostles – Paul being the twelfth in place of Judas. Consequently, two of the apostles were sent to lay their hands upon the believer and to



Peter and Simon Magus, the Sorcerer

18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God."

Acts 8:18-21

communicate the gifts of the holy spirit.

After seeing the wonderful gifts and powers which the apostles were able to communicate, and no doubt after he had received a gift from them himself, Simon the sorcerer offered the apostles money in order to be endued with this apostolic power of communicating gifts of the spirit to others. Hence the name, "Simony," given to any attempt to purchase spiritual powers. Up to this time Simon had passed for a thoroughly converted man; but on the strength of this evidence of his non-appreciation of spiritual things the Apostle Peter tells him with very great plainness of speech that he has neither part nor lot in the matter but is yet in the gall of bitterness – is still unregenerate – merely a spectator and not a participator in the spiritual things.

Alas! how many today, like Simon, are associated with spiritual things, but have neither part nor lot in them; who merely give their money in hope of some advantage, and not with an appreciation of the spiritual things.

PERSECUTION AND ITS GOOD FRUIT – R. 2959

ACTS 8:3-13

"Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the Word."

PERSECUTION is never right, nor is it a joyous matter; nevertheless, God can overrule this, as well as all wrongs, for the good of his people, who can learn also the lessons of "rejoicing in tribulation," and of tracing divine providences through them, – seeing by faith the desirable results. The first persecution of the Church began about the time of Stephen's death, noted in our last lesson. This is variously estimated as having been from three to seven years after the day of Pentecost, tho we have no means of definite information. Saul of Tarsus (afterward called Paul the Apostle), was evidently a leader in the heresy-hunting and persecution which started with Stephen and extended in a general way to all believers, – except the apostles, who, for some reason, seem to have been providentially protected.

The persecution began in Jerusalem, because this so far had been the center of the work, as our Lord had directed, – "beginning at Jerusalem." Not only was it the principal city of Palestine, but, as we have previously seen, it was the resort of pious Jews from all quarters of the world, many of whom sought to make it their home in the close of life, even if they had previously lived abroad. The Lord had graciously granted a season of development for those brought into the Church at Pentecost, and subsequently; and now that they had reached a fair degree of growth in grace and in knowledge, he permitted the winds of persecution to blow against the Church, and to scatter the ripened seeds hither and thither, in every direction.

The same God who directed thus in the affairs of the early Church still loves and cherishes his own; still directs and guides in respect to the interests of his own cause, his Zion. Now, as then, it is with him to permit or to hinder persecution, according as in his wisdom would be for the best interests of his people, and the outworking of his glorious plans. The persecution which then arose had, doubtless, a twofold effect **(1)** It served to test and to sift those who had already named the name of Christ; – to prove their loyalty, their willingness to endure hardness as good soldiers; – their worthiness to be reckoned amongst the overcomers. Not only did it test them, but it undoubtedly strengthened them; for experience shows us that every trial and test endured with faithfulness brings an increase of victory and strength of character.

(2) It became the Lord's means of spreading the truth in every direction, and thus of greatly broadening, as well as deepening, his work in the world. Having first blessed those who, by his providential arrangements, had been gathered to one center, he now scattered them, as lights throughout Palestine and the adjacent country.

Drawing applications to ourselves from this feature of our lesson, we note how the Lord has gathered to this new land, America, a specially prepared class of people, liberty-lovers and truth-lovers, from all parts of the world. We note how he has lighted the torch of liberty and civilization here more generally than elsewhere. We note how, in this specially prepared soil, he has planted the present truth, the "harvest" message which is now shining forth in a feeble manner, not only to all the people of this favored land, but, to the world in general. We note a correspondency, also, in the fact that thus far in this harvest our persecutions have been quiet, – rather than public, open, and demonstrative. We like the early Church, have had an excellent opportunity for cultivating the knowledge of the truth and the graces of the holy spirit. Surely it will not surprise us now, or shortly, if the Lord's providence would permit some open persecution; and if this should be the divine will, are we in that proper condition of heart that it would profit, instead of discourage us, and destroy our faith? Would it mean to us, as to the faithful of the early Church, merely an enlargement of our opportunities, and the broadening of the Lord's work today? We trust it would be so.

An important lesson for all of the Lord's people to learn, is that the Lord himself has full charge and direction of the affairs of his Church; that he who blesses it with his holy spirit, and with the light of the knowledge of God, is the same one who has permitted a restraining of the persecutions and siftings from without and from within. Those who learn this lesson thoroughly are the only ones who, amid all the affairs of life, can rest themselves fully in "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." Let us learn to trace divine providences in the past, and to appreciate them and to apply them as far as possible, to affairs of the present time; and then to trust the Lord, even where we cannot trace him, knowing that all things shall work together for good to them that love him.

HOW TYNDALE'S PERSECUTION RESULTED

As an illustration of how persecutions sometimes, indeed generally, greatly prosper the cause of truth, note the following respecting that eminent English reformer, William Tyndale, who was amongst the first to publish the holy Scriptures in the English language. Not being permitted to do his work of Bible translating in Great Britain, he removed to the city of Worms, Germany, and published there his first complete edition of the New Testament. Several hundred copies of the work went to England. These, by order of King Henry VIII., were bought up for destruction, by the Bishop of London; but Tyndale read the meaning of this providential hindrance of the circulation of the work thus: "I shall get money of him for these books to buy myself out of debt, and the whole world shall cry out at the burning of God's Word; and the over-plus of money shall help me to correct again, and nearly to imprint the same." And so it was. Bishop Tunstall purchased not only all he could secure in Great Britain, but also purchased copies in the city of Antwerp, and had a public burning of these at St. Paul's Cross, London, A.D. 1526. Later on, in spite of the prohibitions of the king, and the energy of the clergy, copies of the New Testament, published in the English language, were smuggled in by vessels laden with grain.

What we all need is implicit trust in God and a burning zeal for the service of the truth, which nothing can daunt or hinder. If thwarted in one way we are to adopt another plan. If hindered in that, to change again – always observing the laws and principles of righteousness,

and relying upon the Lord to overrule the results to his own praise. Under the Lord's providence hundreds of thousands of copies of ***Millennial Dawn*** and millions of tracts have been scattered as seed in all civilized lands. It would not surprise us at all if some persecution or opposition were to arise which would cause these seeds of truth to germinate. The man who, in his anger, stamped his feet upon the seeds, merely pressed them into the earth, where they the better took root. And so it may be in respect to any opposition which the great Adversary may raise up now, and which the Lord may permit. We may not pray for temptations, trials and persecutions, nor may we pray to escape them; but it is surely our privilege to ask that the Lord will not abandon us in temptation, but will ultimately deliver us from the Evil One – in his own time and way – and generally, to overrule our affairs to his own praise.

DEACON PHILIP'S MINISTRY

There was a Philip amongst the twelve apostles, but it is not he that is referred to in this lesson. This Philip was one of the seven deacons whose choice by the Church has been related. (Acts 6:5.) Evidently he had used well the opportunities thus afforded him, by attending not only to the distribution of the natural food to the needy, but by the feeding of his own heart upon the spiritual food also, – thus preparing himself, as a servant and messenger of the Lord, for further service of a more spiritual kind. Philip was one of those whom the persecution drove out of Jerusalem. Let us stop here to notice that the early Church might have said, – Persecution is getting severe; but we will stay where we are, suffer imprisonment, etc., esteeming that the Lord is able to protect us here as well as elsewhere. This would have been sound reasoning; but it would indicate a neglect of the Lord's directions to his Church, saying, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." (Matt. 10:23.) The persecution was intended to scatter them, and failure to take heed to the Lord's directions might have led some of the most earnest and faithful of the Church to obstinately resist the designs of providence. So now, let those who may be called upon to endure persecution remember the Lord's direction; and after giving a proper testimony, if the door of opportunity opens, let them remove to another locality, where their faithfulness and increased knowledge and wisdom in the handling of "the sword of the spirit" may give them opportunities for still greater usefulness. This was the case with Philip, who removed to Samaria, and apparently lost no time in beginning the ministry of the truth, preaching Christ.

It will be remembered that this city of Samaria was the capital of a district called Samaria, whose people were known as Samaritans; being of mixed blood, Jewish and Gentile, they were counted by the Jews as though they were Gentiles; hence "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans." We remember, further, that it was respecting these people that our Lord said to his disciples, when sending them forth, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5,6; 15:24.) Our Lord thus marked the Samaritans as being separate and distinct from the Israelites. We remember, further, that it was because our Lord would not enter into the City of Samaria, and heal its sick, that the people of that city refused to sell the disciples food, as they passed by. It was in resenting this affront that James and John, the apostles, said to our Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven to consume their city?" Jesus answered, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of; the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It was a woman from this same city who later met the Lord at the well, and got from him a little taste of the water of life, then brought many of her friends and neighbors, who also tasted and were refreshed, and many of them believed on him. Nevertheless, our Lord's testimony then was, "Ye worship ye know not what; . . . salvation is of the Jews." – John 3 Luke 9:54-56; John 4:22.

The fact that Philip now came into Samaria, under the leading of divine providence, and preached the gospel there, signifies that the time had come for the gospel to be extended beyond Judaism. It implies, therefore, that this incident occurred at least three and a half years after our Lord's death – after the close of the seventieth symbolical week, and the full end of Israel's special favor as respects the gospel invitation of this age. Evidently the apostles had less strenuous feelings of opposition against the Samaritans than against Gentiles in general, because they were of mixed Jewish blood.

The Samaritans were ripe for the gospel, and the fact that the Jews had disdained them much as they did the Gentiles no doubt made them all the more ready to receive the gospel message, which ignored all caste and class distinction, and accepted into its brotherhood all who confessed their sins, accepted Jesus as the Redeemer, and made full consecration to him. Philip's preaching was backed by the open manifestations of the spirit, in healings, etc., as was all the preaching of that time – intended to establish the faith, and to counteract the wonder-workings of Satan, through necromancers, those possessed of a spirit of divination, etc.

The truth reached the Samaritans just in time to rescue them from some of Satan's wily arts, known at that time as "Black Art," etc., practiced by Simon Magus, the sorcerer. The record is, that his influence with the people had been great, both with rich and poor; and that they recognized him as possessed of "the great power of God." Times have changed since then; sorcery and magic no longer captivate the world to the same extent, and the great deceiver has changed his tactics with the times. As the Apostle declares, he assumes a garment of light, and presents himself as a messenger of light, for the deception of those who are seeking the truth. Today he has a variety of devices, snares and traps for those who are awaking out of the slumbers of gross superstition and ignorance brought down from the dark ages. To these he variously presents himself as a Higher Critic, searching for the truth in the Bible, and finding it a mass of contradiction. To others he appears as an Evolutionist, teaching doctrine wholly contradictory to that of the Scriptures, proving that there was no fall; and hence that there could be no redemption from a fall, no times of restitution from its consequences. To others he appears as a Christian Scientist, affecting the name of Christ as one deception, and the name of Science as another, and presenting a confused medley opposed to both – yet backed, nevertheless, by certain physical reliefs and cures distributed (by the same power which worked through Simon Magus) to those who will yield themselves to the deception, and who will deny the truth and persistently stick to the denial; – they shall have the reward of healing.

We who now oppose the Adversary and his methods are not armed with the powers of physical healing, whereby to appeal to the people; but we are possessed of the truth, which operates as an eyesalve upon the eyes of the understanding of those who accept; – as a cleansing from sin and a relief from burdens; – as the oil of joy upon their heads and in their hearts. The whole matter has taken a higher plane, by reason of the advancement in general knowledge and civilization which have come to the world as a result of the shining of the light through God's faithful ones in the past. Now, as then, the truth brings conviction to those who are in a proper attitude of heart, and relieves them from the bondage of ignorance, superstition, priestcraft, and sectarianism, – bringing them into the liberty wherewith Christ makes free indeed all who become truly his.

Those who accepted Philip's message, and made a consecration to the Lord, signified it by baptism – immersion – in water, symbolizing the immersion (burial) of their wills into the will of God as expressed in Christ; – signifying that henceforth they would be dead to self and to the world, and rise to walk in newness of life, as members of the body of

Christ. We read nothing about a creed or a sect or a denominational name, nor about the recording of the names in a denominational register. The early Church recognized, as we do, that the important matter is that believers should be ***joined to Christ***, and that their names, on this account, should be "written in heaven." Simon, who had previously been the religious (?) leader of the people – their leader into darkness, into the wiles of the Adversary, – became one of Philip's converts, one of those immersed, and a constant attendant upon Philip's ministry, beholding with amazement the power of God operating through him, which power he recognized as being superior to the power of Satan which had operated in himself.

News of God's favor to the Samaritans, and of their acceptance of the Lord, soon reached Jerusalem; and representatives of the whole company of the apostles and others at Jerusalem, went down to Samaria to note the work of the Lord, and, no doubt, to encourage the believers. But they went specially because the ***gifts*** of the holy spirit (miracles, healings, tongues, etc.) could only be communicated through the apostles. However well Philip might proclaim the gospel and immerse believers, he, not being one of the chosen twelve, had not the power of communicating those gifts. (As those gifts were communicated only by the apostles it is evident that they must have ceased in the Church shortly after the apostles died.) Peter was one of those sent, and John, the very one who had said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire from heaven, to destroy these men and their city?" was the other delegate. How much change the Gospel of Christ had wrought, even in this good man! He had learned of Jesus, and now had the same spirit, which sought not to destroy men's lives but to save them.

When the apostles arrived they prayed with the disciples, and then laid their hands upon them, communicating some of the gifts, – power to speak with tongues, to interpret tongues, to perform miracles, etc. As Simon Magus was one of the believers, one of the baptized ones, he, with the rest, undoubtedly received some gift of the holy spirit. Yet he, and quite probably others of the number, were not in full harmony with the Lord and his gracious plans. The ***gifts*** of the spirit might be imparted instantaneously; but the ***fruits*** of the spirit could only be had by growth. Those gifts, therefore, are not to be esteemed as being such good evidence of the divine favor, and nearness to the Lord, as are the fruits of the spirit, which all of the Lord's consecrated people of today should possess in some degree, – meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love. The Apostle Paul declares that if he had not merely one of those gifts, but all of them, yet lacked love, it would profit him nothing, eventually, as respects the great favor to which the Lord has called his Church. – 1 Cor. 13:1-8.

Simon Magus, while astonished with what he had seen, and interested from that standpoint, and convinced that the power was a holy one; and although he had cast in his lot with the believers, and received a gift, – was still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity," as the Apostle Peter subsequently told him. He was thus all the time, but neither recognized the fact himself, nor did the others recognize it. It was then that his interest in the matters under consideration led him to the point of asking Peter to give him the apostolic power of communicating gifts; promising him in return a good compensation in money; – thus showing that he was not interested in the truth and its service from the right standpoint; – that his was merely a curiosity interest, and that selfishness had not given place to love; that he would like to have this apostolic power so that he could use it in a selfish way, for his own aggrandizement, and for his own advantage amongst the people.

There have been many of this same disposition since. They are not necessarily worse men than many others in the world, because they give evidence that they have neither part nor lot with the Lord's people. It is safe to say that

there are hundreds of thousands, yes, millions, of the Simon Magus class in the nominal churches of today; men and women who have never discerned the real spirit of the gospel; but who look at its various arrangements from a mercenary point of view, considering what shall be the gain or loss, the advantage or disadvantage, of their relationship thereto; – and maintaining the relationship because of the honor or social position or worldly prosperity which it has brought them, or is bringing them, or which they hope yet to obtain through it. To all such we would like to say, kindly but firmly, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." We would not say, nor did Peter say to Simon, Your day of grace is past, and you shall be eternally tormented. What God may have for such in the future, under different conditions, we may or may not see clearly; but the point which we are now noting is that such characters have no share in the ***Kingdom***; neither in its present, nor in its future development. Even amongst those who have received present truth, we have reason to fear that some have received it, not in the love of it, but merely in a spirit of curiosity; or with a view to having something which they can use as a means for bringing themselves into some place of prominence amongst the brethren. Such persons are dangerous characters – dangerous as respects themselves, and dangerous as respects their influence in the Church. Such should be carefully avoided in the selection of leaders amongst the Lord's people, no matter what their natural gifts, riches, or talents may be.

"THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE" – R. 4329

ACTS 8:4-25

"And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." – Acts 8:6

OUR preceding lesson told us of the zeal and faithfulness of Deacon Stephen. Today's lesson deals with the faithfulness of Deacon Philip, who was one of those who fled from Jerusalem under the persecution which arose following Stephen's death. He went to live in the city of Samaria, and, his earthen vessel being filled with the holy Spirit, he was a burning and shining light there, and speedily many of the Samaritans believed in Christ. The gift of miraculous healing and casting out of demons attested that Philip was a servant of God, and, as was intended, served to draw attention to the message which he delivered. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and thus caused great joy.

Simon, the magician of Samaria, had long been a spirit medium amongst them, practising witchcraft, sorcery, the black art. His power had been recognized, and he himself had been free to claim personal greatness because of the power of the demons exercised through him. But now the power of Christ being brought into sharp contrast with the demoniacal power and works, the people of Samaria recognized this promptly. Many of them made a full surrender to the Lord and were baptized. Amongst these was the magician himself. Deacon Philip was not the Apostle Philip, and hence was unable to confer the gifts of the holy Spirit upon others, which was an Apostolic privilege exclusively. He therefore sent to Jerusalem, and forthwith Peter and John went to Samaria and laid their hands upon the believers, and imparted to them the miraculous gifts which were a part of the Lord's provision for the Church at that time. Not only for the convincing of outsiders, but also for the uplifting of each other in their meetings, the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues were given, serving practically as instead of the written Word of

God.

We remember that they were the same John and Peter to whom our Lord a few years before had said, "Into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" with the Gospel, "for I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And this is the same John who, with his brother James, was refused the privilege of purchasing bread for their needs, and asked our Lord, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down to consume these men and their city?" We remember our Lord's answer, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Now we find John quite willing to join with Peter in recognizing the Samaritans as brethren – fellow-members of the one Body of Christ; and very willing to confer upon them the gifts of the holy Spirit. What a change, and why? Ah! John was seeing things from a different standpoint. He was no longer actuated by a pride for his Master that would have been willing to destroy his enemies, but now, controlled with a spirit of love, he realized that the Samaritans and all mankind were under the blinding power of the Adversary, and he was as anxious to save their lives as he had been previously willing that they should be destroyed. And is it not so with each one of us? In proportion as we have received the Spirit of Christ, we have learned what love and sympathy towards fellow creatures really mean. We, like the apostles, are drinking of the same spirit which controlled our Master.

But why should the Lord bless Philip's preaching at this time, when previously he forbade any preaching of the Gospel to the Samaritans? The explanation is found in the dispensational change which had meantime occurred. "The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down." It crumbled at the end of the seventieth week of Jewish favor, three and a half years after the cross, Cornelius being the first Gentile convert. This preaching at Samaria was probably three years after the conversion of Cornelius. The Samaritans claimed a relationship to the Jewish Law Covenant, but, as our Lord explained to the woman of Samaria, their claim was fraudulent. They were as separate from the Covenants and promises of Israel as were the other Gentile nations. To this day the Samaritans hold to their old traditions and claim to have a high priest, but entirely without right or authority.

As the old Law Covenant given through Moses was wholly Jewish, Israelitish, and as the New [Law] Covenant to be instituted by Messiah (Head and Body) will be wholly Israelitish, and as the original Abrahamic (Sarah) Covenant blessed only those who exercised the faith of Abraham, it follows that such of the Samaritans as came truly into Christ became spiritual Israelites, while the others, like all the Gentile nations, will during the Millennium have the opportunity of becoming naturalized, fleshly Israelites under Israel's New (Law) Covenant, as the only means of coming into harmony with God.

"SIMONY" IN OLDEN TIMES AND NOW

When the sorcerer, Simon Magus, beheld the Apostolic power – that by the laying on of the hands of the apostles miraculous gifts were imparted to the believers – he offered them money, if they would confer upon him this Apostolic power. Apparently his mind had assented to what he had heard and seen, but his heart was not radically changed. He did not appreciate the matters in which he had a share as one of the believers. It took the Apostle's sharp word to awaken him to a realization of the fact that he was now dealing with God and holy things, and that his failure to appreciate this implied that he was not begotten of the holy Spirit. St. Peter said to him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord if, perchance, the thought of thine heart shall be

forgiven thee, for I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity."

It is not for us to judge the heart, although we are commanded to judge the outward conduct and to discern the difference between the true Vine and its grapes, and the thorn-bush and its thorns. Without attempting to judge the hearts of any, we suggest to all the wisdom of seeing to it that nothing like the spirit of Simon Magus gain any control over us. This may be a special danger in this our day when the power of money is so great. As material things are all moved by the lever of wealth, it is not surprising that many conclude that the world's conversion is merely a matter of dollars and cents, and that those who control the money are the real masters of the situation. There may indeed be some who pride themselves in their money power and who think of it as having authority and direction in the work of the Lord. Let such beware of "Simony." Let them beware of the Apostle's words, "Thy money perish with thee." We are not of those who despise money. But it must be recognized as a servant of the Lord and of the Truth, and not as a master – not as a controlling force. To thus estimate it is to dishonor the Lord and to show that we have failed to grasp the spirit of his Truth.

THOSE THINGS WHICH PHILIP SPAKE

Our Golden Text refers thus to Philip's preaching: "He preached Christ." Some dear Christian people make the mistake of preaching on sociology, the beauties of nature, the things of the world. Others continually dabble with errors and errorists. Such things may have their time and place in connection with the message; but all who would serve the Lord should remember that we are commissioned to preach the Gospel of Christ only. Christ and his message constitute the light which came into our minds – the light which we are to let shine for the blessing of others. The darkness hateth the light and battles against the light; but the light is to keep on shining. Thus said our Lord, "Let your light so shine before men that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father which is in heaven." There it is again. The light is not merely the message which we bear upon our lips, but also the influence which emanates from our daily lives. More and more we are convinced that the will of the Lord is that his message shall be borne by those who are pure of heart. "Be ye clean that bear the message of the Lord's house."

"EXCEPT SOME ONE SHALL GUIDE ME" – R. 4332

ACTS 8:26-40

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." – John 5:39

THE pith of this lesson is the Divine supervision of the Gospel work and use of consecrated talents in the unfolding of the Divine Purposes. Deacon Philip, whose ministries of the Truth were so abundantly blessed of the Lord in Samaria, evidently continued humble, so that the Lord could use him further as his agent and mouthpiece. The message of the Gospel was to be sent into Africa. An Ethiopian eunuch in high station under Candace, the Ethiopian Queen, was a suitable person to bear the message. For a considerable time he had knowledge of the true religion of the Jews. Because a eunuch he could not become a Jew (Deut. 23:1), except as "a proselyte of the gate" – one who adopted the Jewish worship. He had come to Jerusalem to worship on one of the holy festivals. Under the Lord's providence, the hope of Israel, Messiah, was prominent before his mind. He was returning

to his home in Ethiopia and, after the custom of the time, was reading aloud from a scroll. It was Isaiah's prophecy, which he had probably purchased at Jerusalem at considerable cost. He was puzzled by what he read, which seemed to relate to Messiah. Some statements implied his great glory, honor, dignity, power, while others seemed to mention him as despised and rejected of men – led as a lamb to the slaughter. Many other men had read the same passages for centuries with similar perplexity. Why? Because the right time had not come for them to be understood and God had not sent servants or messengers to interpret them.

"THE SPIRIT SAID UNTO PHILIP, GO!"

Meantime the Lord, as able as willing to make "all things work together for good," directed Deacon Philip on a journey which, at the right time, brought him in contact with the eunuch's company, for it is entirely probable that so notable a man would travel with considerable escort besides the driver of his chariot. Philip did not expostulate with the messenger sending him. He did not urge that he had business matters which required his attention, for it was his first business to serve the interests of the Kingdom. If the Lord ever sends us on a mission and makes it possible for us to fulfil it, that should be considered the chief business of life for the time, and everything else secondary, inferior.

Arriving at the appointed place, Philip was on the lookout for service. How we wish that all of the Lord's people might more and more attain to this attitude of heart and mind – a readiness, waiting, looking, to note the Divine providences in their affairs and to use them wisely, as did Philip!

Evidently the chariot had passed Philip and he had heard the reading. He knew that this meant that the eunuch was a man interested in the Word of God and that his mind was centered upon it. He may even have surmised that the Lord had directed the eunuch's attention to this very part of the Scripture at this very moment, so as to make Philip's mission opportune. The Spirit of the Lord told Philip to run after the chariot and get into communication with the reader. In what way the Lord's Spirit thus prompted him we are not informed. We may consider, however, that the holy Spirit dwelt richly in Philip, quickened his perceptive powers to a realization of the opportunities of the moment and suggested to him that this was a way in which his knowledge of the Lord and his consecrated powers might be used in proclaiming the good tidings. So each of us should be so full of zeal for the message, so full of the desire to assist others into the grace of God, that the Spirit of the Lord in us would prompt us to speak a word in season.

Paraphrasing the account we may suppose that Philip, running near to the reader in the chariot, called out, "Friend, do you understand that which you are reading?" So much depends upon a word in season, and the right word! Not only our words, but our tone of voice should be considered, when we attempt to represent the great King as his ambassadors. Kindness and brotherly love should be indicated in our faces and by our words, and made a part of the message we deliver.

The honesty of the eunuch, his readiness for the Truth, his humility of mind, are all indicated by his reply, "How can I understand, except some one shall guide me?" The arrogance which would have given Philip a haughty stare would have meant a heart unready for the Gospel – unworthy of it. The pride which would have said, "I suppose that I understand it as well as you do, sir," would have indicated a heart not meek enough for the Truth, and to be its servant in Africa. A superstitious reverence which would have said, "None but the Doctors of the Law are supposed to understand these writings," would have meant a bounden condition of heart, unready for the message. The eunuch's answer was the proper one for a heart in the right condition towards God and the Truth. It admitted his ignorance of the Prophet's meaning, and it admitted the Divine

power which would explain the seeming contradiction in due time, and it admitted that the Lord would probably in his own time and way send the interpretation through human instrumentality. His invitation to Philip to ride with him in his chariot was a further indication of his meekness and that he realized that in Philip he had found one who, like himself, was deeply interested in the Word of the Lord and his promises to Israel. He would give Philip a lift on his journey and would, doubtless, the while enjoy fellowship with him in holy things.

Many in our day are hindered from receiving a proper knowledge of the Divine Word and Plan through a lack of meekness, humbleness of mind, teachableness. Some of these have concluded that because the Scriptures declare "They shall all be taught of God," therefore they should expect angels or angel voices to guide them individually in the understanding of the Scriptures. Under this error many have been led clairaudiently of the evil spirits into various fanaticisms. Rather we should give heed to the Lord's Word on this subject, and not how all of his true people will be taught of him. The Apostle explains how, saying, "And he gave some apostles, some prophets and teachers for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11,12.) He who rejects the Lord's way evidences the fact that he is not in the right condition of heart and hence is not taught of God.

"SO HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH"

The portion of the prophecy which the eunuch was reading referred to Messiah as meekly enduring the opposition of sinners against himself, saying all manner of evil against him possible, and declaring that in this respect he was like a lamb dumb before his shearers. And what was true of the Master should be increasingly true of all those who are seeking to walk in his steps, in proportion as they make progress in the good way and become copies of God's dear Son.

The eunuch further manifested his humility of mind by asking Philip's interpretation of this prophecy. Did it relate to Isaiah himself or to some one else? We read that this opened Philip's mouth to preach unto him Jesus as the antitypical Lamb of God, as the one who suffered severe humiliations, even unto death, even the death of the cross. We can imagine his explanation of the prophecy, "His generation, who shall declare? for his life is taken from the earth." Philip doubtless explained that although our Lord had ceased to be of the earth, earthy, and had been resurrected to the spirit plane of being and the Divine nature, nevertheless he would have a generation, or a posterity. His posterity, his children, will be on the earthly plane and will be Adam's children, whom he has adopted as his own. In due time, under the Millennial Kingdom, he will become their Life-Giver or Father, their Regenerator or Deliverer, freeing them from the power of the tomb and then restoring to full human perfection as his children all who will receive and profit by the blessed knowledge and opportunities of that time. Thus he will become in due time "The everlasting Father" of the redeemed and restored race of Adam. We can imagine that his preaching of Jesus went still further than this and showed the eunuch that before that glorious day of the world's regeneration another feature of the Divine Program will be called out, namely, the selection of a Church to be the members of the glorious Body, under the Headship of Jesus – the Body otherwise styled, "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife." He doubtless explained to the eunuch that this is the message of the present time, the message or invitation to become heirs of God and Joint-Heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, and members of the great antitypical Messiah, the antitypical Prophet, Priest, King and Judge of the world. He doubtless explained the two steps necessary as an entrance into this grace, this privilege, namely, **(1)** the abandonment of sin and the acceptance of Christ as Redeemer; **(2)** a full consecration of the justified humanity to the service of the Lord and of his brethren and of his Truth.

The eunuch's meek, teachable, honest attitude made it easy for him to receive this glorious message in its simplicity and beauty. He was already a believer, to the extent that he knew. He was already justified by his faith in the Redeemer promised. Now that justification became actually his, as his mind and heart grasped the thought that the Crucified One was the Son of God who bought us with his own precious blood. He was already devoted to the Lord, so far as he knew his will. So now, with clear knowledge directly sent to him through Philip, his consecration was revived, renewed, enlarged, practically applied. Evidently Philip explained to him the New Baptism, not only in the sense in which we are baptized into Christ's death, but also the appropriateness of symbolizing this by water immersion. Note the promptness of the eunuch to confess his full submission to the Lord and to symbolize this in water immersion. Had he not been in ready condition of heart, this, too, would have been put off with some excuse. How evident that God had chosen in him a suitable vessel to bear his message to the Ethiopians – to be a foreign missionary!

Ancient manuscripts omit verse 37. It evidently was added later as a marginal note, as an answer to the question of verse 36. Quite probably such words, or many more, were used by Philip. Evidently the account does not pretend to be a report of all that was said, but merely of the leading features of the conversation. The eunuch commanded the driver of his chariot to stop. Philip and he alighted and he was baptized – immersed. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more. But the latter went on his way rejoicing in the glorious message he had received, which "satisfied his longings as nothing else could do." Doubtless he talked with his charioteer or others of his company and ran by-times of his homeward journey. Tradition has it that amongst his converts in Ethiopia was a Queen herself.

As to how the spirit caught Philip away we may not certainly know. But that was the day of miracles and doubtless his miraculous transportation would not only serve as an encouragement to himself and assurance that his service was under the Lord's supervision, but his vanishing would give the eunuch additional faith in what he had taught him, for

Philip with the Ethiopian Eunich

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Acts 8:38

it would testify that God was with him, and that he was being used as the angels had been used previously.

The general lesson to us is, **(1)** readiness, alertness, to serve the Lord in season and out of season, when convenient to ourselves, and when not convenient – glad of any opportunity and at any cost to be the ambassadors of the King; **(2)** the necessity for humility and promptness of obedience, if we would make progress, and either maintain, or attain to usefulness in the Lord's service.

THE GOLDEN TEXT

As our Golden Text points out, the Lord is revealed in the holy Scriptures, and those who would know him should seek their information from that quarter. Under Divine providence, apostles, prophets and teachers are necessary, indispensable. But no words of man are to be taken as instead of the Word of God. On the contrary, their presentations are to find acceptance only in proportion as they are found to be in harmony with the Scriptures, and to discern this harmony, the holy Spirit is necessary. The Scriptures must be searched, but only by coming into a condition of heart harmony and teachableness, and then by a full consecration receiving the holy Spirit, can we hope to understand the Divine message and to obtain therewith the eternal life which it promises to those guided and taught of the Lord.

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN – R. 5864

ACTS 8:26-40

"Understandest thou what thou readest?" – Acts 8:30

DEACON PHILIP, the instrument of Divine providence in starting the Ethiopian eunuch in the narrow way of discipleship – and through him probably introducing the "good tidings" into Africa – was just such a man as the Lord is pleased to use as His mouthpiece in the service of the Truth. Having proven himself faithful in the inferior work of serving tables, he had been advanced, and been made an ambassador for God in the preaching of the Gospel at Samaria; and the present lesson shows him still further guided and used of the Lord in His blessed service. There is an encouraging lesson here for all who have the same spirit – the same desire to serve the Lord and His cause. Faithfulness in little things is sure to bring larger opportunities.

We are not informed by what means the Lord "spake to Philip," sending him to the road in which he would find the eunuch's chariot. We may be sure, however, that the indication was sufficiently clear to Philip to be more than a mere guess or impression. We are to remember, too, that it was at a time when the Lord used miraculous means of communication, more than at present – doubtless for the very purpose of establishing the faith of His servants as well as their work. Today we walk more by faith, less by sight and miracle. Yet so bright is the light shining upon the Divine Plan and Word that we may safely say that we have much advantage every way, even over those of that time. We are to remember that up to the time of this lesson there were no New Testament writings; nothing, therefore to guide the Apostles and early Evangelists except the more or less miraculous interpositions of God's providence.

Even after we have learned of God's particular care for all of His people, we are inclined to surprise that a solitary individual should be so particularly cared for as was this eunuch – that a special messenger should be sent to him for his instruction in righteousness. Very evidently Divine providence does not regard

the going of all mankind to this same degree. Very evidently there was something in the character of this eunuch, something in his heart-attitude toward God, that was pleasing and acceptable to the Lord, and caused the working of this miracle on his behalf – that he might have needed instruction in the Truth.

AN EARNEST TRUTH-SEEKER

The eunuch belonged to the kingdom of Meroe, which lay on the right bank of the Nile River, from its junction with the Atbara as far south as Khartoum, and thence to the east of the Blue Nile, to the mountains of Abyssinia. He was a court officer, evidently deeply religious, who had come in contact with, and been impressed by, the Jewish religion; and in his religious fervor he had gone up to Jerusalem to worship, and to gain additional knowledge of the true God. His case, like that of the Samaritans and of Cornelius, indicates that this occurrence was after the close of Israel's "seventy weeks," of special favor; for this eunuch was not a Jew in the fullest sense – eunuchs not being fully accepted as proselytes, nor granted the privileges of the congregation. – Deuteronomy 23:1.

Up to this time the eunuch, like Cornelius and the believing Samaritans, had been a part of the Lazarus class, lying at the gate of Dives, desiring to be fed with some crumbs from the bountiful table of blessing and promises which God had spread for Israel. Now the change had come. The House of Israel had been cast off; the end of Israel's special favor as respects the Gospel had come; and the time to receive the Lazarus class to Abraham's bosom had arrived. Philip as an angel, or messenger, of the Lord was sent to carry this representative of the Lazarus class to the arms of Father Abraham, as a true child of Abraham, through faith.

The eunuch had been at the head center of the religion which he esteemed to be the true one. He had come away from Jerusalem with a manuscript copy of one of the holy Prophets – Isaiah – a treasure in those times, very costly. That this manuscript was written in the Greek language, and not in the Hebrew, seems to be indicated by the word Esaias, which is the Greek form of Isaiah. He was hungering and thirsting for the Truth, and making his best possible endeavor to obtain it, as is evidenced by his purchase of the manuscript, and his long journey, and his reading. That he was doing more than simply reading – that he was studying – is evidenced by his language to Philip. Can we wonder that God's special providences would be manifested toward such an one – toward a person of such a condition of heart, hungering and thirsting for the Truth? We cannot wonder at it. It is in full accord with the Lord's promise, that such shall be filled; that such seekers shall find; that such knockers shall have the door of Truth opened unto them. Let us remember that we are under the care of the same God, and that He changes not; and let us learn the lesson that He is as well able today as ever to assist the sincere Truth-seeker.

Another lesson connected with this matter pertains to times and seasons. God could have directed the eunuch to the meeting of the Church at Jerusalem, and to the instructions of the Apostles there. But this probably would not have been so favorable for the eunuch. After receiving the Apostolic instruction he might have referred the matter to the Scribes and Pharisees, and have received in return explanations more or less confusing. In the Lord's providence he quite likely heard something of the Christians, and their claims that Messiah had come and had been crucified, and he quite probably knew the other side of the story – that the chief priests and teachers claimed that the whole matter was a fraud, an imposition. Possibly these very thoughts had led him to procure the manuscript he was reading, and had brought him into the attitude of mind favorable for the reception of the Truth when Philip expounded it.

A HELPING HAND

Let us learn from this, not only in respect

to our own affairs, but also in respect to the general service of the Truth, to trust implicitly in Divine Wisdom and Power – to remember that "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and that He knoweth best how to bring them in contact with the Truth. Properly learned, this lesson will not slack our hands in the Divine service – for true servants will still be anxious and ready to serve, as was Philip – but it will serve to strengthen our hearts and to take from us that fearfulness that is a hindrance to the peace of many of God's children. Let us not fear for the Lord's Word, but remember His declaration through the Prophet, "My Word, that goeth forth out of My mouth, shall not return unto Me void; it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The chariot probably overtook and passed Philip in the road, the eunuch driving leisurely, in order that he might read. He was reading aloud, after the custom of that time and country, and according to the injunctions laid upon the people by the Jewish teachers. Indeed, it was one of the Jewish rules that the faithful, in traveling, should read if they had no companionship. We are not informed how the Spirit told Philip to hail the eunuch. Possibly in the same miraculous way in which he was sent to this road, or possibly having been sent to this road, he was on the look-out for the object of his mission; and hearing the eunuch reading from the prophecy, Philip may have understood at once that this was the favored person, and a favorable time for the message to the service of which he had been consecrated.

This gives us a suggestion – all of the Lord's people, in proportion as they desire to be the servants of the Truth, should be continually on the alert to note opportunities for service, and should expect to be guided and used of the Lord. All of the Lord's people are ministers, servants of the Truth; and each should seek to use every opportunity presenting itself, knowing not which may be specially prospered of the Lord. Wherever we see evidences of devotion to the Lord and to His Word, we should be continually on the alert to extend a helping hand. We should, as Philip did, seek an opportunity for conversing with such, with a view to giving them the help which they need, the very assistance which the Lord has extended to us through some channel. We are to be on the alert to pass along the blessing which we have received, and to esteem that this is the chief business of life with those who have consecrated themselves to the service of the King of kings.

Philip's inquiry, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" may not always be well received; but it was a very direct way of approaching his errand. It is well to use tact; but we have the thought that many of the Lord's people are inclined to use too much tact, and are not sufficiently direct in their endeavors to present the Gospel Message. Had Philip been too much under the control of this wrong sentiment respecting tact, he might have talked to the eunuch quite a while about the weather, the crops, his home in Ethiopia, the peace and prosperity of that country, its exports and imports, the religious status of the people, etc. Thus he might gradually have gotten his hearer's mind quite off the most important of all subjects. Considering that he heard him and knew the subject of his study, we cannot think of a better introduction to his message than the method and language which Philip adopted: "Understandest thou what thou readest?"

This was a test question, so to speak. If the eunuch did have an understanding of what he was reading he would take no offense at this, but would gladly have said, "Yes, friend, I thank God that I do; and the knowledge is very precious to me. Do you also understand it?" But had he been of the wrong condition of heart his answer might have been, with more or less manifestation of offense, "What is that to you? Mind your own business!" Or had he been of a hypocritical cast of mind, like the Pharisees to whom Jesus spoke, he would have professed a knowledge of the subject;

and then to cover his own ignorance of it, he would have made some general remarks and have turned the conversation into another channel.

We are not to expect those who are in a Pharisaical condition to receive the Truth from us, any more than from the Lord. We are to know, according to the Lord's Word, that the Truth is purposely hidden from all not in the right attitude of heart to receive it – that it is indefinite, indistinct, unintelligible to them. This is one difficulty with the teachers of churchianity today. Like the Pharisees and Scribes and chief priests of old, they say, "Are we blind also?"* They claim to know; but we know that they know that they don't know. Therefore, as our Lord said to their prototypes, their blindness continues; for no one can expect to be taught of God while in that self-sufficient and dishonest condition of mind which boasts of knowledge and of the faith which it lacks.

A MEEK, TEACHABLE SPIRIT

All those to whom the Lord specially sends the Message of His grace during this Gospel Age are in considerable degree like this eunuch of our lesson – earnest, honest, Truth-seekers, not afraid to acknowledge that they do not know, and neither afraid nor ashamed to receive whatever assistance the Lord may provide. The eunuch did not stop to inquire of Philip, "Are you a priest? or a Pharisee? or a Doctor of the Law?" It was sufficient to him that he held in his hand what he believed to be a Message from God; and that he knew it contained various statements, promises, etc., which he did not understand. He believed that the God who gave this prophecy was both able and willing to furnish an interpretation of it, and he was seeking that interpretation; and whoever could give such an interpretation as would shed light upon his questions would by that means be proven a teacher of God, a servant of the Truth, a light-bearer.

The eunuch's answer implied this, when he said, "How can I understand, unless some man should guide me?" So earnest was he in his quest of the Truth that the bare suggestion of assistance implied in Philip's question was sufficient to arouse fully his interest; and he entreated Philip to have a seat with him in his chariot, and thus grant him the benefit of whatever information could be given. We are not surprised that a heart so noble, and yet so humble and teachable, should be specially favored of the Lord, and have a messenger sent specially to him for his instruction, while others by the million were passed by – not esteemed worthy. It is the same today; and while the Lord does not generally direct His people in such a miraculous manner as He directed Philip to the eunuch, we nevertheless have general instructions along the same line; viz., "Preach the Gospel to the ***meek***." "He that hath an ***ear***, let him hear." – Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 13:9; Revelation 2:7.

Our Message, as the Prophet declares, is to bind up broken hearts, and not to break hearts; we are to preach to the meek, and not to the froward, the Gospel of Christ. The hard hearts and the froward, God will deal with in another way. He will break them upon the anvil of affliction, trouble and discipline in His own due time and manner. Meantime, in this Gospel Age, He is seeking for the Bride amongst those who are already broken and already to some extent meek and teachable. We should not waste our time in futile efforts, contrary to this Scriptural rule. Let those who have not the Gospel, but who have merely a message of reformation, preach political reforms, social reforms, moral reforms. The Lord's Word to His consecrated, the Royal Priesthood, is, "Preach the Good Tidings to the meek, bind up the broken-hearted!"

THE GOSPEL TO THE MEEK

It was evidently not of chance, but of providence, that the eunuch had under consideration the particular part of Isaiah's prophecy which refers to our Lord Jesus as the Lamb before His shearers opening not His

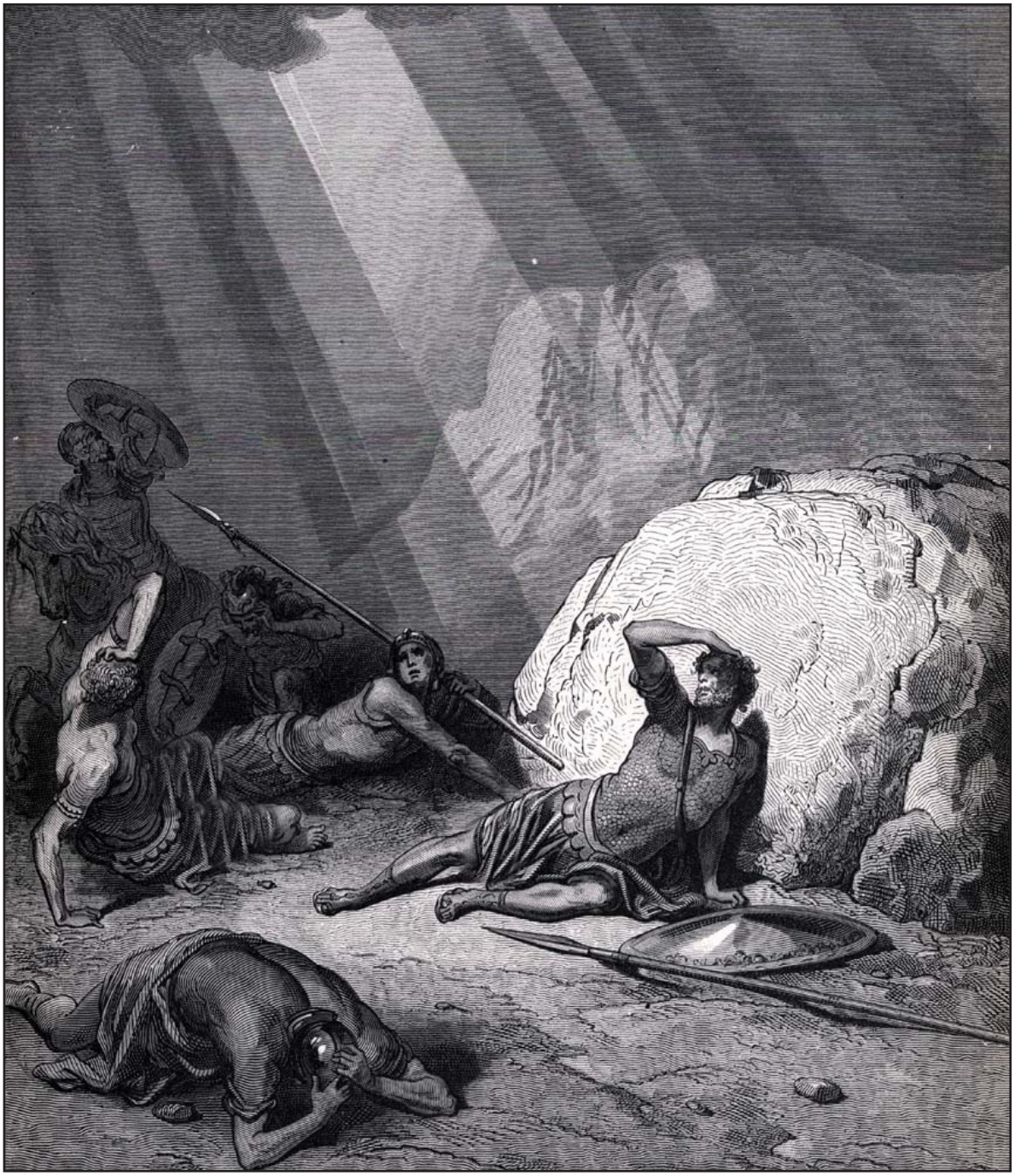
mouth in protest; telling about His humiliation, and how His life would be taken from the earth; and instituting a query respecting His posterity. (Isaiah 53:8.) No wonder the poor eunuch was mystified! No wonder the Jews were all mystified! Unquestionably this prophecy, like the majority of prophecies, could be but imperfectly comprehended until fulfilled – could be understood only in the light of its fulfillment, and then only by those in a proper attitude of heart and under the instruction, the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We should notice in this connection: **(1)** that while the Scriptures are "the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God," able to make wise, they cannot be understood until the Lord's due time; **(2)** that they can be understood only under the leading and instruction of the Holy Spirit; **(3)** and yet, the Holy Spirit was not exercised upon the Truth-seeker either through the Scriptures or through any mental process, but through the living representative of the Spirit – through the Gospel Message delivered by a fellow servant. The true child of God, the real Truth-seeker, following the proper lines, and properly trusting to the Lord, according to His Word, will neither ignore nor reject the assistance which God has been pleased to render through teachers in the Church. He will merely seek to find such teachers as God shall raise up, and the distinction between these and sectarian teachers; and one of his best, safest and surest methods of knowing the teachers whom the Lord will raise up, will be by their ability to make simple, clear, plain, the Word of God – "written aforetime for our admonition."

This was the only credential offered by Philip in his ministry of the Truth. He had been taught of God through the Apostles, and was now able, in turn, to communicate to the hearing ear of the eunuch the simple story of how Christ had come into the world to redeem the world, had died for man's sins, had arisen, and ascended up to glory; that now, meantime, before blessing the world through Christ according to promise, God was calling out an elect Little Flock to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the Kingdom; and that just as soon as this election should be completed the Messiah (Jesus the Head, and the Church, His Body) would be manifested in glory and in ruling and blessing power to the world of mankind – the long-looked-for Messiah, whose work had been foretold by "all the holy Prophets since the world began."

Philip undoubtedly further explained to the eunuch, that those who accepted Christ as their Savior, and who desired to become His disciples, taking up their cross to follow Him, should give their assent to this matter by baptism. Apparently it did not take the eunuch long to decide what his course should be; and his readiness of heart to follow the Lamb whithersoever He would lead, is indicated by his promptness to be baptized.

Philip was ready to receive him as a fellow-member of the Church of Christ, and ready to give him the symbol of introduction into the Body of Christ – baptism – as soon as he gave evidence of having accepted the Lord, and having made consecration to Him. He made no request that the eunuch learn the catechism, nor that he confess something else such as well-meaning but mistaken men in the Dark Ages promulgated as necessary and as explanatory of the Bible. Neither did he say, "Now I will write your name; and you will be considered a member of the Church on that account, and I will procure for you some authority to preach the Gospel in Ethiopia." No; at that time the subject had not been confused and befogged as it is now. Philip preached the Gospel in its simplicity, and the eunuch received it in like manner; and with the Gospel itself went the right and authority to declare it. "He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word." (Jeremiah 23:28.) All who have received the anointing of the Spirit, the unction from the Holy One, are thus recognized as members of the Royal Priesthood, and fully commissioned to tell forth the good tidings, as opportunity and circumstances may properly admit.



Conversion of Saul by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Acts 9:3-4

"WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?" – R. 4355

ACTS 9:1-19

"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" – Acts 9:4

HAVING already noted the establishment of the Gospel in Judea and Samaria and the opening of the door of opportunity to the Gentiles, we come now to the consideration of the spread of the message amongst the Gentiles. This brings us into touch with the great Apostle Paul, whose labors in the ministry will be the theme of the International Lessons for the remainder of this year.

The Apostle to the Gentiles had two names, Saul and Paul. Of Jewish parentage he was named after Israel's first King, Saul; but, as his father was a Roman citizen, it was proper that he should receive a special name with such and Paul was chosen – possibly because in the Greek language the name Saul (Saulus) signified "***waddling***." We find that after St. Paul's ministry reached to foreign lands he adopted and used his Roman citizenship name exclusively.

His family stock was strongly Jewish and religious – Pharisees. This accounted for his not being sent to the University of Tarsus, but instead to Jerusalem to the School of Gamaliel. Nevertheless, quite probably his early association with learned Greeks helped to give him mental poise, which was afterward helpful to him when he addressed all classes.

Tradition has it that his parents were quite wealthy, as their position of Roman citizenship implies. Paul's education in Gamaliel's School further implies this, as that was an advanced School or Seminary, attended by few except the sons of the rich. It is surmised that Paul's conversion to Christianity isolated him completely from his home and family and deprived him of an income previously enjoyed, all of which he gladly forsook for Christ's sake. The fact that he had a trade at tent-making is not out of harmony with this, for it is the custom of the rich to give their sons trades. The fact that St. Paul was poor and needed to use his trade seems to imply that his financial allowances were discontinued. His later condition, on the contrary, seems to imply that he afterward inherited a patrimony, which enabled him to live in his own hired house, with numerous conveniences, enjoyed at that time only by the wealthy, and surely not by prisoners in general. It is remarkable that money matters are scarcely mentioned in connection with our Lord and the Apostles, the coins in sufficient amount for taxes and the collection of donations for sufferings at Jerusalem at one time being the only exceptions we recall. We are glad to follow this same course in connection with the present Harvest Work and to commend it to all the Household of Faith everywhere.

Although St. Paul declared, as his enemies would be inclined to say, that in bodily presence he was weak and his speech contemptible, nevertheless, in offset to this, we recall that at Lystra the populace compared him to their god Mercury and thus impliedly complimented his general brilliancy and vigor of manner or both. Dr. Peloubet summarizes this great man's character in the following glowing terms, which we fully endorse: –

"He was deeply religious, whole-souled, ardent, energetic, persevering, broad-minded, affectionate, loving. He was great in more ways, probably, than any other man of human history. He was a great traveler, a great author, a great orator, a great organizer, a great missionary, a great philosopher. All of this genius was yielded in absolute consecration to Jesus Christ. He is the Moses of the New Testament. The two stand supreme amongst men."

HOW NOBLE HIS CONVERSION

We must not use this word conversion in its ordinary sense. We must remember St. Paul's

own words to the effect that he was a strong believer in a true God and fully consecrated to his service, not in a formal or nominal sense, but heartily, energetically, with a zeal which persecuted the Church. He had a zeal toward God, but it was not according to knowledge. When God supplied him with the knowledge, it did not change his heart, his impulse, his devotion; it merely changed the direction of his activities. The word convert signifies to turn around. Paul was not turned from a wrong condition of heart to a right one, but he was turned about in his course of action. He served the same God, and with the same zeal, but intelligently and correctly. It is important that we note this carefully, so that we shall not expect God's dealings to be after this manner with unbelievers. He does not smite them down, but, as the Scriptures say, draws them. And he draws only such as are in the right attitude of heart – "Feeling after him." – Acts 17:27.

St. Paul's experience may find more of a parallel in the Christian Church, amongst those consecrated to the Lord, but blinded by superstition. Such may violently persecute those of "this way," and may do so in all "good conscience," as did St. Paul. There is hope for all such, that in some manner the Lord will cause the eyes of their understanding to open. We have more hope of the conversion from error to Truth of those who, in their blindness, are bitter persecutors of "this way," than we have for those who are cold and indifferent or lukewarm. The Lord stands pledged to help those whose hearts are right toward him. True, many, like St. Paul, may weep bitter tears in future years over their misdeeds of ignorance, over their failure to give proper heed to the instructions of the Scriptures, but in the end the Lord will deliver them. On the contrary, however, there is little hope for any who have once tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the coming age and been made partakers of the holy Spirit – if such shall fall away we may do all in our power for their recovery, but cannot have much hope. As the Apostle remarks, it will be impossible to renew those who have gone to this length.

THE ARREST OF THE "INJURIOUS" MAN

The previous lesson narrated the progress of the Truth, the Lord blessing the activities of its followers; but still Saul of Tarsus was energetically opposing the Lord's followers and, as an authority in the Law before the Sanhedrin and the high priest and the people, he was carrying the persecution with a high hand. It was evidently because of his consent that Stephen was stoned. His latest move was to get orders from the high priest to bring the Christians of Damascus to Jerusalem to be tried before the Sanhedrin, rather than that they should be tried in their local synagogue. The authority had been secured and Paul, as a representative of the highest Jewish authority of the time, accompanied by a band of men, possibly zealots like himself or possibly commissioned servants, a sort of police squad, neared Damascus at about midday. Suddenly, in the midst of the noonday brightness, came a still brighter light, which fell specially upon Saul, and in the midst of which he sank to the ground quite overcome. Was it a sun-stroke? No! It was a vision "Above the brightness of the sun at noonday" – a vision of the Christ, the Son of God in Glory. A voice was also heard, not only by Saul, but by his companions, though they comprehended not the words as he did. He heard in the Hebrew tongue the message from the Lord, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" The bewildered Saul queried, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the answer came, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." [The remaining words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks; and he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" are not found in the old manuscripts.] "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

What an opening of the eyes of Saul's understanding occurred at that moment, when he lost his natural sight by reason of the Lord's mercy upon him! We can better imagine than explain what must have been the course of his reasoning. With a self-righteousness he had been a believer in God

against heresy and heretics. He had thought of himself, doubtless, as having a specially large degree of Divine approval, because of his untiring zeal – and now suddenly to be told that Jesus was really the Messiah! This was the significance of our Lord's first reproof, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me!" Saul thought verily that he had been doing God service in persecuting those whom he believed were a little band of heretics, amongst whom were not many great, wise, learned or noble. Now, to his astonishment, he found that the Glorious One of the vision claimed generally the unwise, ignoble, poor as his brethren, his "members," whose sufferings were a part of his own.

SAUL HUMBLED AND MEEK

The zealous Pharisee, loyal and appointed to the putting down of heretics, who so prided himself upon his zeal for the Lord, in one moment was humbled to the dust, not only literally falling to the ground, but crest-fallen in his mind and self-esteem. The city of Damascus, which he had expected to enter with great dignity as the representative of the Jewish High Priest, the head of the Jewish religious system, he entered very differently. Opening his eyes after the voice had told him to go into the city, Saul found himself totally blind, so that he required to be led by the hand. So overwhelmed was he that for three days he did neither eat nor drink. He was doubtless acquainted at Damascus or possibly stopping at a hotel, but evidently on the most aristocratic street of the city, called "Straight," because it was really straight, as were so few of the streets of old-time cities. It was a very noble thoroughfare for those times of narrow streets. Its width was one hundred feet and it had a colonnade of marble columns separating the roadway from the building.

ANANIAS GOD'S MESSENGER

If one mentioned Ananias in the Scriptures was convicted of falsity toward the Lord, another of the same name was found faithful. He resided at Damascus. To him the Lord appeared in a vision directing him fully as to how he should find Saul and what he should do to him for the opening of his eyes. Ananias protested that there must be some mistake, because this man Saul had done much evil to the saints of Jerusalem. He knew also the purpose of his visit to Damascus.

The Lord's commendation of Saul to Ananias was, "Behold, he prayeth!" Ah! how much of a story is told in those three words! How sure we may be that those who similarly humbly address the Almighty are in no injurious mood! True, there are hypocritical prayers, just as our Lord illustrated in the parable of the Pharisees and the publican, but, taken as a whole, private prayer may be considered a sure index to an honest, contrite heart. In our estimation, only the praying ones, even of the Lord's consecrated people, are at all likely to win the prize. If they do not love the Lord enough to render thanks for his mercies and to approach the throne of the heavenly grace and obtain mercy and strength to help in every time of need, then they are not likely to have sufficient strength to stand the trials and tests. We wish that we could feel sure that all of our readers are faithful and earnest in the practice of prayer. We are sure of many of them, but as we long for their progress, we urge them to embrace this great privilege heartily.

Ananias is the first one accredited with the use of the word "Saints" in connection with Jesus' followers. As we well understand, the word signifies "holy ones," "sanctified ones." Surely it is a fitting name for all who profess and endeavor to follow in the footsteps of their Master. Let us each try to be worthy of the name, whether it ever be applied to us or not.

A CHOSEN VESSEL TO ME

In answer to Ananias' protest, in the vision the Lord said to him, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of

Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Saul was peculiarly fitted by birth, by education and by temperament for the service for which the Lord chose him. He was a chosen vessel, and one of large capacity. And yet he was only a vessel. The good things that vessel was to carry were the Divine message of love and mercy. So it is with all the called "members" of the Church. We are merely vessels. The excellency, the merit, the worth, is of our Lord. We are merely servants to him and to his Church. We are not to understand that Saul was chosen to go to heaven, but chosen to be a vessel of mercy. But even in this respect his choice was dependent upon his own willingness. Speaking of the matter himself he declares, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Elsewhere the Apostle tells us that the "Lord called me from my mother's womb." Presumably he meant that the Divine providence evidently had ordered and arranged that he should be born under certain conditions and environments which tended to make of him just such a vessel for the Gospel as he now was. This choice did not interfere with his free agency, however. He himself declares that he might still become a castaway, even after he had preached to others. The same lesson is appropriate to all of us. The Lord may order our affairs so as to give us special opportunities and privileges in connection with his work, but he never interferes with our hearts – to be in his service against our will. We may at any time draw back from the service, "But," said St. Paul, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." – Heb. 10:38.

The chosen vessel was to bear the message of grace

(1) To the Gentiles;

(2) To Kings;

(3) To Israel.

We can see the propriety of preaching to the Gentiles first in order. We can see also that such a person as St. Paul had special opportunities for serving the Truth, on such occasions as those in which he appeared and reasoned before Felix, Augustus, Agrippa and others – possibly before the Emperor Nero. (2 Tim. 4:16,17.) His commission also mentioned Israel, and we remember how his preaching in various quarters was "to the Jew first."

SUFFER FOR MY NAME'S SAKE

How strangely it sounds, "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake!" Is any other service than that of our Lord ever entered on these terms – promises of suffering? Surely not. Yet how honest for the Lord not to call his disciples under any misapprehension of the facts! We are called to suffer with him – to sacrifice ourselves, our earthly interests – to share his Cross and, by these experiences, to prove that we have been begotten of his Spirit, and that it has been shed abroad in our hearts and constituted us copies of God's dear Son. Faithfulness to this cause insures the reward of joint-heirship with our Redeemer in his Kingdom; nor can those Kingdom honors be hoped for on any other terms. The Apostle understood this and seems to give the thought, also, that the more any of the Lord's followers can share of the sufferings of Christ, in the flesh, proportionately will be his share in the glory which by and by shall be revealed to us – in the "members of his Body."

The expression, "For my name's sake," is comprehensive. It includes everything connected with the Divine Plan, of which Jesus, the Messiah, is the center. It includes sufferings for the Truth's sake, because the Truth is vitally connected with the "only Name." It includes the brethren because they have named the name of Christ and they are under his name as members of his Body. It includes all the work of the Millennial Kingdom because he is the Head of it all, and his name, his honor, is associated with it all. Let us, therefore, be glad of any sufferings which come to us directly or indirectly,

because of our faithfulness to the "precious name" and these various interests which are associated with it.

"APPEARED TO THEE IN THE WAY"

Assured by the Lord's leadings that the way was open to him to serve the Truth, Ananias hesitated no longer. In full confidence of faith he addressed Saul in the most kindly terms, saying, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the holy Spirit." (V. 12.) Promptly there fell from Saul's eyes something resembling fish scales. Evidently the intense light had destroyed the surface of the eye, which now peeled off. His sight was restored, though to what degree of perfection is questionable. It seems evident that for the remainder of life he was afflicted with weak eyes, which hindered his writing his own epistles, except one which, he remarked, was written in large characters. We can fancy the disadvantage he would be under in some respects by reason of this affliction, that his bodily presence would be much less attractive than before, and that nothing but the Truth behind his words could longer influence his auditors.

We can fancy the sympathy which St. Paul's affliction called forth among the loving brethren. "I bear you witness, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." – Gal. 4:15.

The Apostle as a chosen vessel was to have a very conspicuous part in the Divine program, in the introduction of the Gospel, and his own humility was a very essential matter. Doubtless the Lord foresaw that this remnant of his eye trouble would ever keep him in remembrance of the great blunder he made in his zeal without knowledge, and of the Lord's mercy to him. These two thoughts would doubtless keep him humble and trustful and probably provide a great blessing to him, even though he entreated for its removal, until the Lord indicated otherwise, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor. 12:9.) Ah, says the Apostle, if having this affliction means more Divine grace, then I am content to keep it and would be sorry to part with it. Let us, dear friends, view our trials, persecutions, difficulties, thus – as of Divine permission for our good. Let us be assured that he who has accepted us in the bonds of love and who has begotten us with his Spirit and called us sons, is not unmindful of our highest interests and would not suffer us to be tried and tempted except as he would make all such experiences work out harmoniously to our highest welfare.

Saul had been praying and fasting for three days and nights and now realized the Lord's forgiving love, as manifested in the sending of Ananias, in harmony with his dream and with a recovery of a measure of his sight. With this evidence of Divine favor he would start afresh. First he would be baptized and thus symbolize his allegiance to the Crucified One. Then he would eat for the refreshment of his body that the strength might be used in the service of his new Master.

We read that forthwith Saul preached Christ in the synagogue of Damascus. We admire his courage, his honesty! We do well to let the illustration quicken our own minds and hearts with appreciation that we may be fortified for similar and all emergencies – to use every opportunity to serve the Lord and to undo anything that we have previously done amiss. Presumably the Apostle felt his need of special preparation for the ministry of the Cross of Christ. At all events it is presumed that it was shortly after his conversion, shortly after his preaching at Damascus, that he turned aside into the desert of Arabia. It is possible that those three years were spent studying out the various features of the Divine Program. Doubtless there he received visions which filled him with enthusiasm for the work of his great message, the blessings of which have come down through all age and are still with us.

SANCTIFIED THROUGH A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH – R. 2968

ACTS 9:1-20

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." – Acts 3:19-21

CONVERSION is a proper enough word to use respecting the change of course necessary for Jews to make in becoming Christians. The word is used in a totally different sense, however, today, when we refer to the conversion of the dissolute and unbelieving to faith and obedience as disciples of Christ. ***Any*** radical change or revolution of thought or conduct is not improperly called conversion. It is well that this point be clearly enunciated, because the misapprehension is so general. Paul's conversion, for instance, is likened to the conversion of sinners, strangers, aliens and foreigners from God; whereas it more nearly resembled the conversion of a Christian of today from opposition to present truth to its love and service. Such conversions today are quite frequent – many who once burned ***Millennial Dawn*** now love it, and are doing all in their power to spread abroad its teachings, its views of the divine character and plan, its presentation of Messiah and his work, past and future. The change, or conversion of such persons is acknowledged to be remarkable – things they once hated now they love – things they once loved now they abominate – old things are become new to them, from the new standpoint, – the new light upon the divine plan which has shined into their hearts.

Saul of Tarsus, the bitter enemy of the Lord Jesus and his followers, was, at the same time, a zealous servant of God; and his persecutions of the truth, as he himself assures us, were undertaken and prosecuted with zeal, because he thought that thus he did God service. He was a ***good*** man according to his light – but that light was a dim one. It was because he was at heart honest, sincere, good, loyal to the Lord, that a special miracle was wrought for the opening of the eyes of his understanding – that he might see the truth. His sincerity is amply attested by the promptness of his obedience as soon as his mental eyes were opened. He changed not as respected his zeal for God and his cause, but merely in the direction in which that zeal was exercised, and in the manner of its exercise, after it was subjected to the mind of Christ through the holy spirit received. So today while we have the Scriptural assurance that "None of the wicked shall understand," we have also the assurance that "The wise shall understand." The "wise" are not the "wicked," and we esteem those who have manifested a bitter opposition toward present truth to be not "wicked" at heart, but deceived, blinded.

We confidently expect that many of this class will yet be found amongst the "wise" to whom it shall be granted to understand the glorious things of the divine plan now being revealed through the Scriptures. It will be revealed to them because they are not of the wicked; but are like Saul of Tarsus, true children of God, whose zeal for him has been misdirected, misguided, misused. Some may kick against the pricks of facts, evidence, conscience, etc., longer than others; but eventually the Lord will grant to each of them some experience, or trial, the bitter experience of which will prepare them to see the light, the truth, in the right direction. Thus many of them sing, – "E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

Saul's father was a Roman citizen; probably a man of wealth and influence: he was a Jew of the holiness sect called Pharisees – the most exact and rigid in respect to the divine law. His son named after Saul, the first king of Israel, was also given a Roman name, Paul, because of his father's Roman citizenship. The

Apostle's reference to having suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, is understood to imply that he had been disinherited by his father because of his acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Quite evidently he was poor in the beginning of his ministry, as is evident from his laboring at tent-making while preaching. The fact that subsequently the record represents him as a man of considerable influence, and with one or more servants, is considered by many to justify the inference that at a later date he inherited property, possibly by reason of his father's death. In no other way can his "own hired house" in Rome, and his influence with officials, shipmasters, etc., be accounted for; – little attention and consideration are given to a pauper prisoner.

As to Paul's personal appearance: An iron medal was recently found which purported to give a likeness. There is also a Roman tablet of about the fourth century, which shows Paul seated in a curule chair; both represent him as of fine appearance, somewhat bald, with beard, and a fine open countenance; about medium stature and weight. In the "***Acts of Paul and Thecla***," the first Christian romance, written about A.D. 150, there is a description of Paul which is probably the best, and a true tradition. In this he is described as "small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well built, with eyebrows meeting; rather long nosed; with motions full of grace, for sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes like an angel. His manner was singularly winning." Very evidently his good education and contact with people in the higher walks of life gave him that grace and ease of manner and speech he manifested so conspicuously in the presence of the many high officials with whom he came in contact in various ways, as the representative of the Lord.

Our lesson connects with the narrative of Philip: while the latter was preaching Christ, Saul was breathing out threatenings against all of "this way," and doing all that he could to stamp out Christianity. In-as-much as the persecution had caused the scattering of believers, Saul was pursuing them – going even outside the province of Judea in his zeal to crush out that which he believed to be dangerous heresy. Some may wonder how he could be at heart loyal to the Lord, and yet in mind be so bitter against the Lord's faithful. Let us suggest how the matter probably appeared to Saul's mind: Doubtless he was full of the Jewish sentiment respecting Messiah, respecting his nation, Israel; he considered it a certain and unquestionable fact that the Pharisees represented God and all the glorious prophecies and traditions of the nation; and that as Jehovah had favored this nation for now these many centuries, his favor, undoubtedly, must still be with it; so that if he had any further revelations to make they would undoubtedly come through the scribes and pharisees who "sit in Moses' seat" – as representatives of God and of the Law. He expected a Messiah of dignity and wealth and social standing in the nation; – if born in the natural way at all to be of one of the best families. He expected him to establish the dignity of Israel upon a plane similar to, but higher than that of Solomon; – that he would be a great leader and commander to his people, who would successfully carry them through every difficulty and opposition like as did Moses, Joshua, David, – but still greater, still grander, still more successful.

It is surely difficult for us to imagine how absurd would be the claims of Jesus, to a mind filled with such expectations. Jesus had neither wealth nor social standing nor influence amongst his own people; he was despised and rejected by the religious chiefs and elders of the nation Moses represented; he could have no power or influence whatever with the Roman Emperor or others – in the way of establishing Israel as the chief nation of the world, whose laws should ultimately extend to every nation, carrying with them the foretold Messianic blessings. No, from Paul's standpoint Jesus was a fraud, a deceiver, a false Messiah, his disciples were crack-brained dupes, and their doctrines were calculated to bring odium upon the religious rulers, who

represented Moses in the nation, – calculated to stir up strife and division amongst the people and to mislead them and turn their minds entirely away from Moses and the Law and the hopes of Israel; and thus to hinder the good cause of God which had been gradually developing for centuries.

It was Paul's zeal for God and his cause that made him a persecutor, and not his love for persecution itself, – nor any brutal desires that gloried in the sufferings of others. His impulse was duty – toward God and toward his nation; for if the false doctrines spread it meant to him a spreading of opposition to both, and temporarily, at least, a frustration of the hopes of Israel – putting further off the glorious day of blessing for which all Israel had longed and hoped. Similarly we find today noble Christian people opposing the present truth in the very same spirit. It is not that they love or appreciate persecution, but that they believe they are doing God service, – that the promulgation of present truth means the shaking if not the overthrow of all the religious systems in which they trust – which they believe to be of divine origin, and through which they are hoping to bring about the Kingdom of God condition through missionary efforts, and the conversion of the world. Present truth declares all these efforts to be misdirected and futile; it points out the fall of Babylon and everything pertaining to her; it declares the establishing of God's Kingdom, and the exaltation of the royal priesthood outside of sectarian lines; ignoring sect membership, it acknowledges only "Israelites indeed," personally attached to the Redeemer. The revolution of thought, the conversion necessary now, is almost as great, and almost as difficult as was that which came to Paul and other sectarians of his nation. Let us rejoice then, if by the Lord's grace our eyes are opening to the truth; and let us have more of compassion for others who are still in the condition in which Saul of Tarsus was when he persecuted those of "this way."

The light which shone about Saul and those who went with him, was evidently a supernatural one, because the time of the manifestation was about noon (Acts 22:6) and the light was far brighter than that of the sun which at the same time, no doubt, was shining with great brightness, as is general in that country. The phenomenon was seen by the entire band, but its special features were known only to Saul; the others saw something of the light but they saw not the vision which Saul saw representing the Son of Man in his glorified condition. The others heard a sound but did not distinguish the words which Saul heard. All fell to the ground, but all apparently were able to rise again and to stand wondering, except Saul whose eyes were seriously injured so that he was blind. Similarly Stephen saw a vision while those who were near him saw nothing: similarly John saw the dove descending upon Jesus while the others about saw nothing: similarly Jesus heard certain words of the Father while the multitude said it thundered. It is even mentioned here that the voice spoke in the Hebrew tongue: whereas those who were with Saul probably spoke in the Syriac or the Greek language.

Saul's astonished answer was, "Who art thou Lord?" This was the entire difficulty, he did not know the Lord; and as our Master himself declared, this lack of knowledge of the Son implied a lack of correct knowledge of the Father. We have his further explanation that however others in the past might have known something about God, they could never really know him, in the sense of personal acquaintance and appreciation of his character and spirit, except through the Son – a part of whose object in coming was to reveal the Father. So we might say of all who have persecuted the body of Christ, even when they did it ignorantly, it was because they did not know Jesus – because they had not received of his spirit in sufficient measure. Let us beware that no such spirit of persecution finds any sympathy or lodgment in our hearts, or any expression in our words or deeds. This will not mean, however, that we shall never offer criticism either of persons or doctrines; nor

that we shall never reprove or rebuke and that publicly (2 Tim. 4:2); but it surely does mean that our reproving and rebuking, of teachings and of teachers, shall be done from a Scriptural standpoint – giving reasons, giving them plainly but without bitterness, without harshness, without unkindness in any degree.

The statement, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" quite probably well explains Paul's condition of body and mind at the time; but these words are not found in the ancient Greek manuscripts: likewise the words, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," are omitted.

For three days Saul neither ate nor drank, and was totally blind. What a season for reflection! What a humiliation to think that he had fought against the truth! What prayers for forgiveness, and what pledges of consecration to Jesus, we may imagine filled his heart during those days! Unquestionably it was a time of good resolution as respected the future, if peradventure, the Lord would graciously forgive him and grant an opportunity to retrieve the past. He had a dream, too, and in it he beheld a man anointing his eyes, restoring his sight. On the fourth day a man, a poor and humble disciple of Jesus, named Ananias, came, not without fear, to visit Saul; – knowing him by reputation, as an enemy of all who believed in "this way;" knowing that he was lodged in the house of one who was not a friend of the truth, but assured of the Lord that Saul was praying and would welcome him, having been informed in a vision: Ananias when sent of the Lord courageously did his part.

There is a lesson here for all of us; the Lord did not send one of the Apostles from Jerusalem, nor was Ananias one of the elders or deacons, as far as we know; but he was a plain, humble, obedient disciple, "A broken and emptied vessel, for the Master's use made meet." Let all of the Lord's dear people be similarly filled with the Lord's spirit, and on the alert; emptied of self, feeling their own brokenness and littleness, let them be ready and anxious to do God's service; that they may be used of him as opportunity shall occur. What a blessing must have come to Ananias in connection with his service! Ever afterward he could think how he had been a humble instrument in the Lord's hands in carrying a blessing to one who subsequently became such a noble servant of the cross of Christ. Likewise some of the Lord's faithful ones in recent times have taken the Lord's message either by word or tract or pamphlet, and have opened the eyes of some who subsequently have become mighty for the truth and for the pulling down of the strongholds of error. What a rejoicing such have had in the privileges of their service! We know not which will prosper, this or that, therefore let us diligently use every opportunity as it may come to us; praying the while for much wisdom and grace and many opportunities for service.

The Lord's foreknowledge is clearly displayed in verses 15,16; he knew Saul – knew of his honesty and of his zeal; – he knew that this honesty and zeal as soon as they should be rightly directed would make just such an instrument for his service as he desired to use. The Apostle Paul recognized this himself, and even traces divine providence so far back as his birth, declaring that the Lord had chosen him from his mother's womb. He could see in the light of subsequent events how all of his affairs, from earliest childhood, had been tending in a favorable direction to prepare him for his work of ministry, as an apostle; – and even his experiences as a persecutor proved profitable, for they humbled his estimate of himself and undoubtedly gave him a larger degree of sympathy for those suffering from a similar blindness, increasing his helpfulness toward them. This does not signify, however, that God had predetermined that Paul should have a place in the Kingdom: that he determined for himself, – making his calling and election sure by faith and obedience. The Lord providentially guided his steps in childhood and youth, so that he

learned certain lessons, and gained certain preparations which might be useful in due time; and in due time he opened the eyes of his understanding, knowing well what would be his own choice thereafter. Nevertheless, this same Apostle declares that even after having preached the gospel to others, he, himself, might have become a castaway; – having borne the Lord's name before the Gentiles and Israelites and kings, and having suffered great things for the Lord's name's sake, he might still fail to maintain, faithfully to the end, the character of an overcomer, and thus fail to become a joint-heir with his Lord.

Ananias coming to Saul introduced himself beautifully – he had the Lord's spirit: he was glad to know Saul as a brother; glad to forget that he had been a persecutor of the Church; he did not upbraid him; he did not say, You deserve eternal torment; nor You deserve a cowhiding; – he made no unkind allusion to the past, but addressed him on the contrary in the light of the information the Lord had given him, saying, "Brother Saul." There is a beautiful lesson here for many of the Lord's people who seem more disposed to chide and upbraid than to commend and rejoice with former persecutors: this is one of the necessary lessons to be learned by all – it is an evidence of the indwelling of the spirit of Christ, the spirit of love, parts of which are brotherly kindness, gentleness, meekness.

Great scales fell from Saul's eyes, and a measure of natural sight was restored; but oh, how much greater was the spiritual sight which he received, – the illumination of his heart, his mind! The darkness and obscurity of tradition upon the Law and the Prophets were now largely dissipated, because he saw Jesus – Jesus as the Redeemer suffering death for the sins of the whole world; – Jesus glorified, directing the election of the Church, his members, his body, his joint-heirs, – and who were, by and by, to be with Jesus the Messiah in glory and majesty to bless, to restore, to uplift Israel and all the families of the earth. True, the evidences are that Paul never fully recovered his eyesight; and he likewise testifies that his spiritual sight never reached perfection, saying, "Now, we see through a glass obscurely, then, face to face."

Having taken his stand for Christ, he acknowledged him in the usual way, by baptism, and not by joining a sectarian system. He joined the body of Christ, and thus became a fellow-member with all who are joined to Christ, the one Head of the one body. Immediately he met with the Lord's people; he was no longer ashamed of them; he could not now do too much for them; any honor and dignity which were his by virtue of his birth, and wealth, and Roman citizenship, were none too good to be sacrificed for the Lord, and having learned that in persecuting the Lord's people he persecuted the Lord himself, so he now understood that in meeting with the Lord's people and honoring them, he was meeting with and honoring the Lord. Forthwith he preached Jesus. He preached him as the Son of God, the one in whom the prophecies of the past were being fulfilled, the Messiah who had redeemed, and who in God's due time would deliver Israel and the world from the bondage of Satan – sin and death.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

This is from Peter's discourse shortly after the day of Pentecost; his words were doubtless in some degree prophecies; they point down to the second coming of our Lord – though Peter may not have comprehended how far distant that event would be. The exhortation to be converted to the Lord was delivered to the Jews who were already his typical people, in covenant relationship, but who needed now to accept the conditions of the New Covenant and to make a corresponding change in their lives – from membership in the house of servants, to membership in the house of sons – from being amongst those for whom atonement sacrifices were made year by year continually, which could never take away sin, to be of those accepting the one sacrifice of Christ and its redeeming merit, – to trust

for a present covering for their sins, through faith in the precious blood, and to hope for an ultimate ***blotting out*** of them at the second coming of the Lord, as the text declares.

So long as the believer is blemished physically, mentally, morally, by sin, so long he has the evidence that his sins are not ***blotted out***. He may, nevertheless, rejoice greatly as the prophet indicates, saying "Blessed is the man whose sins are covered," but he should look forward longingly to the time when every evidence of the sin, every mark of guilt, will be so completely blotted out as to need no further covering. This to the saints of the gospel age will occur at the second coming of Christ, when they shall be "changed," in an instant, receiving the new spiritual bodies which the Lord has promised them in the first resurrection. To the world this blotting out of sins will come gradually, during the Millennial age. In proportion as each being comes into full harmony with the great Prophet, Priest and King then reigning, each will gradually experience the blessings of restitution – eliminating all traces of evil and sin, and restoring gradually to the original perfection lost in Adam, redeemed by Jesus, and restored by the blotting out of sins under the ministry of his Kingdom.

"WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?" – R. 5874

ACTS 9:1-31

"Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." – 1 Timothy 1:15 (R.V.)

WHOEVER thinks of Saul's transformation from an enemy of Christ and His Church to a friend and zealous servant as an experience on a par with the conversion of sinners is greatly in error. Such conduct as is related in today's Study is not the conduct of sinners, enemies of God. In our opinion, however, the term "conversion" would scarcely be appropriate in such a case. Saul of Tarsus was either a bad man and a hypocritical Pharisee, a money-lover, a self-lover, or else an "Israelite indeed," whose aim and object was the service of God, and whose persecution of the early Church was prompted by his fidelity to God. We believe that the latter description is the one which fitted the case of Saul; for it is in harmony with his own testimony on the subject. – Acts 26:9-11.

If, then, Saul was a true and loyal member of the favored nation of Israel, thoroughly consecrated to God and serving Him to the best of his ability and knowledge, but merely blinded for the time by prejudice and misconception, we can no more think of his case as a conversion than the cases of the other Apostles. Our Lord chose the original Twelve because they were Israelites indeed; and He gave them the instruction necessary for His service. This He did also for Saul, though in a more striking manner.

The word convert signifies the turning about in an opposite direction. But Saul was already going in the right direction; namely, in a whole-hearted service of God, although his efforts were expended upon the wrong thing in that right direction. The Lord merely opened his eyes of understanding, and showed him the better how his efforts should be used. Saul needed merely to be shown aright; and this he demonstrated by as much fidelity and energy in the Lord's service afterward as he had ignorantly misused previously.

CONSCIENTIOUS WRONG-DOING

Saul was one of those Israelites who lived

amongst the Gentiles, but who occasionally went up to Jerusalem to certain of the feasts. (Deuteronomy 16:16.) His home was in the city of Tarsus, a notable city of that time – said to have been excelled in scholarship only by the cities of Alexandria and Athens. Not only had he the advantages of a home in such a city, but his family was an influential one, as is implied in the fact that he was a citizen, not only of Tarsus, but also of Rome. In addition to the education of his home city, he had received a special course in theology, or Jewish Law, at Jerusalem, under Gamaliel, one of the greatest teachers of that time.

Saul's early training, therefore, and all of its conditions were favorable to producing in him a breadth and refinement of thought equaled by few. These conditions, combined with his honesty of heart and his zeal for God, although not at first according to knowledge, fitted him to become just what the Lord subsequently made him; namely, "a chosen vessel" unto the Lord, to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

Apparently the circumstances connected with the stoning of St. Stephen only incited Saul to greater energy in stamping out what he believed to be a very injurious doctrine – heresy. Our own experience confirms the thought that an earnest, conscientious opponent is more to be respected than a cold, indifferent professed friend. We are reminded of our Lord's words, "I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." (Revelation 3:16.) Let us have respect, therefore, for all who are warm-hearted and zealous, remembering that there is more hope of their being pleasing to God, and being accounted worthy to receive the Truth, than for the lukewarm.

Under the arrangements of the Roman government, the Jewish priesthood was granted considerable power, and had come to exercise very much of the power subsequently used by the Popes of Rome. The religious rulers had power to authorize arrests and imprisonments for the infraction of their rules and regulations. Saul, exercising the same respect to law and authority which subsequently marked all of his dealings and teachings as a Christian, did not attempt to take matters into his own hands in regard to the persecution of the Christians, but went about it in the manner recognized as legal – under the sanction and authority of the highest religious tribunal. Let us remember that nearly all persecutions have been sanctioned by some human law, and regulate ourselves according to the Divine code.

THE THREE ACCOUNTS HARMONIZED

The account given in today's Study regarding the opening of the eyes of Saul's understanding is that of St. Luke, and was doubtless received directly from the Apostle Paul himself, with whom St. Luke traveled for a time. Two other accounts are given by St. Paul himself. (See Acts 22:6-11; 26:12-20.) The three accounts are in practical agreement, and show only such variations as might reasonably be expected, considering the fact that they were delivered under different conditions, as it was sought to emphasize or elaborate different points.

Had the three accounts been exactly alike, word for word, there would have been just ground for supposing a special preparation of the text with this harmony in view. When rightly viewed, even the seeming discrepancy of the account is additional evidence of the truthfulness of all. The account itself being simple, we need to give attention only to those points which apparently conflict.

All three accounts say that Saul himself heard a voice, saw a light and fell to the ground. One account adds that all with him fell to the ground as well. The account in our lesson declares that the men of his company "stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." Another account says, "They beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." These accounts can

be harmonized in this way: Saul himself was evidently the center of manifestation – "a great light shone round about me." Doubtless his companions saw something of this light in a general way, but they did not see the source of the light. They did not see the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ – "seeing no man." Saul, however, saw the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he himself subsequently testified. – 1 Corinthians 15:8.

Although no one but Saul was smitten to the ground, the others, who stood speechless and terrorstricken, no doubt soon kneeled reverently about their leader. Respecting the voice – Saul and all with him heard a sound, "the voice," but only Saul could distinguish the words – which were meant for him alone. A similar case is recorded in John 12:28,29. In one sense of the word Saul and all of his companions heard the sound, or voice; but in another sense of the word Saul alone heard the voice. We use this same form of expression in our daily conversation. If some one addresses us in a low or indistinct voice, we say that we did not hear. We mean that although we heard the voice, we did not understand or comprehend what was said.

OPENING OF SAUL'S MENTAL VISION

Saul's feelings, as he heard from the Lord of Glory a reproof of his misdirected zeal, can be better imagined than described. Nevertheless, we can but admire the promptness with which he at once ceased his opposition and placed himself on the side of the One whose cause he had so recently persecuted. We can imagine him praying, "Lord, teach me! In my blindness and ignorance I have been fighting against Thee, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Messiah, while verily I thought that I did God service. Having made such a great mistake, I am thoroughly humbled. I can no longer trust either to my own wisdom or to the wisdom of those in whom I have heretofore confided – the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees. Now, Lord, I come to Thee. Show me how I can undo some of the great wrong which I have done ignorantly. Show me; and I will gladly and promptly follow and obey."

How deep a hold the matter took upon Saul's mind may be judged from the fact that for three days he neither ate nor drank. He could not think lightly of his own blinded course. Deep contrition is always a good evidence of genuine repentance of wrong. No doubt his thoughts were busy; for he was well educated in the Law and in the Prophets and was familiar with what he had learned concerning the Nazarene. It is reasonable to suppose that those three days of blindness and fasting were days of prayer and reflection, during which he diligently compared the testimony of the Law and the Prophets with what he knew of the Nazarene and His teachings. Saul's natural sight had been destroyed; but his mental vision had been opened, and he now saw matters in a new and wonderful light.

AN ILLUSTRATION OF DIVINE METHODS

In a previous lesson the name Ananias was associated with ungodliness and falsehood. But in today's Study we find another Ananias of a totally different character – a true servant of the Lord. His hesitation to go to Saul does not seem to have been caused by opposition or by faithlessness, but rather a reasonable caution. He had heard of Saul, and possibly also knew Saul's host to be an enemy of the Cause of Christ. Therefore he wished to assure himself that he had not misunderstood the Lord. But the Lord graciously made the matter clear to him, as He always does to His faithful ones; and Ananias promptly fulfilled his mission.

Here again is an illustration of Divine methods. The Lord sent upon this important errand one who apparently was a very humble member of the Church. He did not send St. Peter, St. James and St. John, the Apostles, from Jerusalem, with great pomp and show to receive the penitent enemy of the Cross and to make a public triumph. He merely used a ready and willing instrument that was nearby.

This should be a lesson to us that the Lord is both able and willing to use in His service the humble ones who are ready and willing.

The scales which fell from Saul's eyes would seem to indicate that a certain portion of the eye had been destroyed by the great light; and the healing may be said to have been in a natural way. Although informed that he received his sight, we are not informed that his eyes were made whole. Indeed, it seems evident, from subsequent statements, that to his dying day his eyes never recovered soundness, and his sight was never again normal.

It has been surmised, and with good reason, that the continued weakness of his eyes constituted what the Apostle terms "a thorn in the flesh." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10.) Although under the power of the Holy Spirit he was granted many gifts of the Spirit, amongst which was the gift of healing, and although he exercised this gift of healing upon many (Acts 19:11,12), yet the Lord did not relieve him from his own weakness in this respect. This must have been all the greater trial; for it would seem all the more strange that he who could heal others could not heal himself – that he who had Divine power for the blessing of others of this way should not have the Divine power for his own blessing.

To St. Paul's petition our Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee; My strength is made perfect in weakness." The noble Apostle exclaims, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Thereafter he never requested the removal of this "thorn."

Several incidents in St. Paul's experience confirm this conclusion: **(1)** Although an educated man, he seldom wrote his own letters; and of the one letter which he did write, although one of the briefest, he remarks, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with ***my own hand***." (Galatians 6:11.) The Greek would even give the thought that these words apologize for the use of very large characters in the writing – such as a semi-blind person would use. **(2)** When standing before the tribunal of the chief captain, St. Paul declared that he did not know Ananias as the high priest; whereas, if his eyesight had been good, he could not have well helped knowing the high priest, on account of his gorgeous apparel. (Acts 23:5.) **(3)** In writing to the Galatians he tells them (4:15) that, when he first met them, their love and sympathy for him were such that they would willingly have plucked out their eyes for him – an expression which would be meaningless unless his eyes were defective.

After a few days in which to gain strength from his fasting and from the nervous excitement incidental to his experiences – days of communion with those whom he had come to persecute, and whom now in his renewed condition of mind he recognized and fellowshiped as dear brethren – Saul promptly began to preach Christ as the Son of God – publicly using the opportunities afforded in the Jewish synagogues. The account of his enlightenment in the Gospel is that of a most noble character, which commands the respect of every class in every time.

ST. PAUL AS A TYPE

We are inclined to regard the Apostle Paul as in some sense of the word a figure, or likeness, or type of his race – Israel – and the opening of their eyes of understanding which is now shortly due to take place. Amongst the Jews are many who seem to be Israelites indeed, merely blinded, as both the Prophet and the Apostle have described. (Romans 11:7-12.) That nation, whose blinding took place in the Fifth Thousand-year Day, and which has been blinded throughout the Sixth Thousand-year Day, is to have its eyes opened on the Third Day, which will be the Seventh Thousand-year Day – the Millennial Day. "After Two Days will He revive us; in the Third Day He will raise us up." – Hosea 6:1-3.

During all this time Israel has also been

without food or drink of a spiritual kind. Israel also is to be a chosen vessel in the Lord's hand as connected with the earthly agencies in bearing the Message which shall bless the Gentiles and all the families of the earth. We are near to the time for the opening of Israel's eyes. When that time shall have fully come, the Lord will send some Ananias, whose touch under Divine favor shall bring sight. The name Ananias signifies, "Jah is gracious."

VISITING, WITH PETER, THE PRIMITIVE SAINTS – R. 2986

ACTS 9:31-43

"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

THE PERSECUTION which scattered the disciples from Jerusalem throughout all Judea, and of which Paul was one of the leaders, subsided shortly after his conversion; and was followed by a period of rest, recuperation, edification, etc., as mentioned in the first verse of our lesson. Paul's conversion may have had something to do with this, but in all probability a trouble which arose about this time between the Jews and their Roman rulers had more to do with it.

About the year A.D. 38 the Emperor, Caligula Caesar, who had but recently come into his office, promulgated an order that his statue should be set up in various quarters of the empire, and should be worshipped. When the Jews learned of this order, and that it was the intention to put these statues in Jerusalem, and even in the Temple itself, as well as elsewhere, their indignation and trouble knew no bounds. They gathered in great masses, young and old, to entreat the local governor to intercede for them that such a desecration of their holy temple and holy city and holy land should not be permitted. Speaking of one of these protest-gatherings, the historian says: "A vast throng, arranged in six columns of **(1)** old women, **(2)** matrons, **(3)** maids, **(4)** old men, **(5)** men in their strength, and **(6)** boys, gathered before the palace of the procurator, and threw themselves on the earth, with wild and piteous cries of despair, when he showed himself on the balcony. They declared they would die, but never give way. Petronius [the governor] made every effort to have the Emperor change the edict, but the most he could arrange was a command to leave the Temple untouched. But many altars were raised to the Emperor outside of its gates; and news came that all the synagogues in Alexandria had been turned into temples to Caesar. These things lasted till January, A.D. 41, on the 24th day of which Caligula was murdered."

It is not surprising that such outside persecution and interference with their own religious rites and liberties caused the Jews to relax their persecutions of the Christians, and thus brought about the period of rest mentioned. Persecutors never like persecution for themselves. Those who have the mind of Christ are never persecutors; they feel it to be their bounden duty not to cooperate, not to assist, things which they believe to be wrong; they may even find it necessary or expedient to denounce the wrong, and to show up its inconsistencies; and in some instances to name the active agents in these wrong teachings and wrong doings – as the apostles have done on several occasions in their writings. But as for persecuting others, the Lord's people can take no part in this: we are hindered by the spirit of love, the mind of Christ, which directs that we should do unto others as we would they should do unto us – our Golden Rule, our "perfect law of liberty."

The record says that the churches were edified.

This word edified carries in it the thought of construction or building. We get the thought, therefore, that this time of peace was a time of upbuilding amongst the little groups of the Lord's people in Palestine. There is a two-fold sense in which the Church may be built up or edified – in numbers, and also in the graces of the spirit. Apparently the infant Church was edified both ways. It was growing in numbers, and growing in grace. That the latter is included is shown by the following declaration, that the believers walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy spirit.

The Scriptures declare that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psa. 111:10) – not a selfish fear; but a reverential fear; not a fear that the Lord is evil instead of good; not a fear that he will eternally torment or otherwise unjustly deal with his enemies; but a reverence of the Lord which recognizes his greatness and his goodness, appreciates the same, and fears to do aught that would be displeasing to him or that would separate from his love and favor. This proper kind of fear, which is the beginning of wisdom will never be lost, so long as the wisdom is maintained. We creatures of the dust, "by nature children of wrath, even as others," and transformed and renewed only by the Lord's grace and power and truth, must never lose sight of our own littleness and insufficiency, and of our complete dependence upon the Lord's mercy and favor. To lose sight of this would surely mean our fall. Hence, altho the Apostle declares that perfect love casteth out fear, we esteem his meaning in this passage to be the dread fear rather than reverential fear. Perfect love will cast out dread and slavish fear, but it will cultivate and stimulate and increase our reverence for the Lord; so that, as the Apostle again declares, even the advanced Christian who has lost his slavish fear, will, from love of God, and from a desire to please him and to attain the end which he has indicated for us, "fear, lest a promise being left us. . . any should seem to come short of it." – 1 John 4:18; Heb. 4:1.

But reverence of God was not the only grace developed in the primitive church. To it was added the comfort of the holy spirit. (The use of the word "ghost" as a translation of the Greek word ***pneuma*** is very unfortunate, and confusing to the English reader. The word should never be used. ***Pneuma*** should invariably be translated "spirit."*) The holy spirit is the spirit, mind or disposition of God; and the primitive Church was cultivating this, developing it in their hearts, walking in it, that is, living it. The word ***comfort*** signifies united, cemented or strengthened together; and the thought of the passage as a whole, therefore, would be that the Church was not only multiplying in numbers, and being edified or built up together as God's holy Church or temple, but that the various "living stones" were being cemented or bound together by the holy spirit. This is a forcible and graphic description of a glorious condition in the primitive Church. It is what should be striven for by the Lord's dear people everywhere today as well; indeed it is as true of the true Church of Christ now as it was then.

*See MILLENNIAL DAWN Vol. V. Chap. 8.

The thought of building together, building up, etc., when applied to the individual, signifies his own faith structure, which the Apostle tells us is to be composed of gold, silver and precious stones – divine truth and character – from which should be excluded all wood, hay and stubble of error, sin and hypocrisy. The same thought may be applied to the Church assemblies in a slightly different way; for each little congregation of the Church may be considered as a temporary temple, or abiding place of God in the world, as represented by his holy spirit indwelling. In a still larger sense the whole Church in any period may be considered as God's temple, in which he representatively resides, and through which he speaks to such as have an ear to hear. It is in this sense of the word that the seven churches of Revelation represent the one Church of the Lord throughout the world, in seven different epochs of its history. But let it

be distinctly borne in mind that none of these proper enough uses of the word "temple," etc., interfere at all with the still larger, and still more ***exact*** thought respecting the divine Temple, the Church.

This still more exact thought is with reference to the Church glorified, which has not been under construction, upbuilding, during the Gospel age, but is to be constructed speedily at the second advent of the Lord and the gathering together of his saints unto him. In this last view, be it noticed, each of the Lord's followers is symbolically a "living stone," now being chiseled, fitted, polished, prepared, for a place in the glorious Temple, whose construction was delayed until the end of the age, when, as typified by Solomon's Temple, each part will come together with exactness, "without the sound of a hammer," – without the slightest need of trimming or altering any of those perfected ones, all of whom together will constitute the glorious Temple of God, which will be filled with his presence in the fullest and most complete sense, and constitute the center of his blessing and instruction to all the families of the earth during the Millennium; – "the New Jerusalem, which cometh down from God out of heaven." – 1 Pet. 2:4-7; Rev. 21:27,10; 1 Kings 6:7.

"THE SAINTS WHICH DWELT AT LYDDA"

We see from this narrative that altho the Apostles made Jerusalem the headquarters for their work they, nevertheless, went hither and thither throughout Judea, meeting with the Lord's people scattered by the previous persecution, etc., and forming ***nuclei*** of little congregations in every direction. In these travels Peter came to Lydda, the chief city in the Plain of Sharon (Saron), about midway between Jerusalem and Joppa – about ten miles from each; and his special mission, we are told, was the visiting of the saints. We like this word "saints." It signifies holy, set apart, sanctified believers in Christ. There is much opposition to the use of the word today, attributable, we believe, to two reasons. One is that the vast majority of professing Christians know that they are not saints, not sanctified, not living as near to the Lord as they could live, – not separate, even in heart, from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Such persons have strong reasons for disliking the word "saints," realizing that it would exclude them and nearly all of their friends and special associates in Christian work. Another reason for opposition to the word "saints" is that in the dark ages it became the custom for the Roman and Greek Catholic churches to "canonize," or legally set apart as objects of reverence, certain persons respecting whom, after several centuries had elapsed, nothing specially evil was remembered, but only things esteemed as honorable and praiseworthy. The word, saints, thus became separated from living Christians; and, indeed, this may have been because there were few Christians really so "alive toward God" as to be representatives of saintship. Another reason why some dislike this term, "saints," is that they consider it to be rather boastful, – some would even say hypocritical; because having lost sight of "justification by faith" in its proper application they have become accustomed to think of and to pray for ***all*** Christians as "miserable sinners" – overlooking the fact that there are some in whom "the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled," because "walking not ***after*** the flesh, but ***after*** the spirit," the merit of Christ covers all their unwilling shortcomings. – Rom. 8:4.

The Lord's people, however, are to remember to apply and take pleasure in all the names and practices authorized by apostolic usage; and the term "saint" certainly thus approves itself to us. Almost all of the epistles of the New Testament are addressed to the saints; and those who can not properly apply the term to themselves can not properly apply to themselves the exceeding great and precious promises contained in those epistles, – for all the promises are addressed to and meant for the saints – the sanctified in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 1:1, etc.) Let it be borne in mind that the word "saint"

does not signify actual perfection, merely, as in our Lord's case, but also those reckoned holy through him; and that the apostles who were saints, and who classed themselves with the saints of God, declared respecting themselves, "We also are men of like passions with you." – Acts 14:15.

The term saints, then, properly applied in the Church refers to those who altho originally "children of wrath, even as others," have been rescued from that condition of condemnation, and been washed, cleansed, and thus brought into accord with God through the forgiveness of their sins and the covering of their weaknesses and blemishes; and who, in connection with these blessings of God, and in appreciation of them, became the "sanctified in Christ Jesus" by making full consecration of themselves to live, not perfect lives (an impossibility), but as nearly perfect as they may be able; – the Lord's grace making them continually "holy, acceptable to God" the Father, through the merit of Christ Jesus. Let us not be ashamed of this name, "saints": if it present before our minds saintship, holiness, separateness from the world, that is just the very thought which should be there continually. It is a thought which will help us, and enable us the better to live separate from the world, as our Master indicated, saying, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." – John 17:16.

"JESUS CHRIST MAKETH THEE WHOLE."

Our Golden Text is from Peter's words to AEneas, the paralytic, whom the Apostle found at Lydda and healed. We are not told that he was one of the saints; the presumption, therefore, is that he was not, but that at most he was a friend to some of them, and that thus the Apostle's attention was drawn to him. The fact that he had been bedfast, helpless, eight years, testified that the healing was a miracle. Its fame spread abroad, and resulted, we are told, in the drawing of many unto the Lord and to the Church. Thus did the Lord establish the Church and attract to it those who were in the right attitude of heart, using miracles then, as he now uses other means. Those miracles, as already pointed out, can not have lasted much longer than the apostles themselves; the gifts of healing, etc., being granted only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles – and the twelve had no successors – the heavenly Jerusalem had twelve foundations, and no more, and in them were written the names of the twelve apostles, and no others.

"THIS WOMAN WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS."

One of the disciples, that is, one of the saints, residing at Joppa, on the seacoast, was apparently a woman of means and education, and if her name represented her appearance, she was very beautiful. Tabitha, in the Syriac language, Dorcas, in the Greek, signifies graceful, beautiful. But this woman was famed for a beauty and a grace entirely separate and distinct from whatever she possessed of these qualities naturally. Hers was the beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, full of love and helpfulness. She was a burning and a shining light for the Lord in that vicinity, evidently. She was not "a Bible reader," for there were no Bibles in the language of the people at that time. She was not a tract distributor nor a colporteur, for there was no printing done then; but she did what she could; she served the Lord, his brethren and all needing help, according to the best opportunities afforded her. She helped the poor, and particularly widows, who as a class at that time were apt to be in a very trying position, especially if poor. Dorcas had been in the ***habit*** (the Greek text indicates) of assisting the poor with garments, etc., probably, almost certainly, assisting them also with words of encouragement and helpfulness, and ministering to them the truth. Under these circumstances it is not strange that her death should have produced sorrow, especially amongst the beneficiaries of her charities, and amongst the numerous friends which a beautiful Christ-like spirit of this kind is sure to make.

While it is very true that the civilized

conditions of the present time take from us many of the opportunities possessed by Dorcas, by supplying means of employment for poor widows and others indigent, and by providing County Homes, etc., for the needy, nevertheless, all who have the spirit of the Lord, which Dorcas had, and which she so nobly exemplified, will surely still find opportunities for laying down their lives, some way or other, in the service of the household of faith. As the Apostle says, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16.) Some one has suggested that possibly Dorcas was a martyr – that her death probably resulted from her service to others. A Christian poet has said of such as she: –

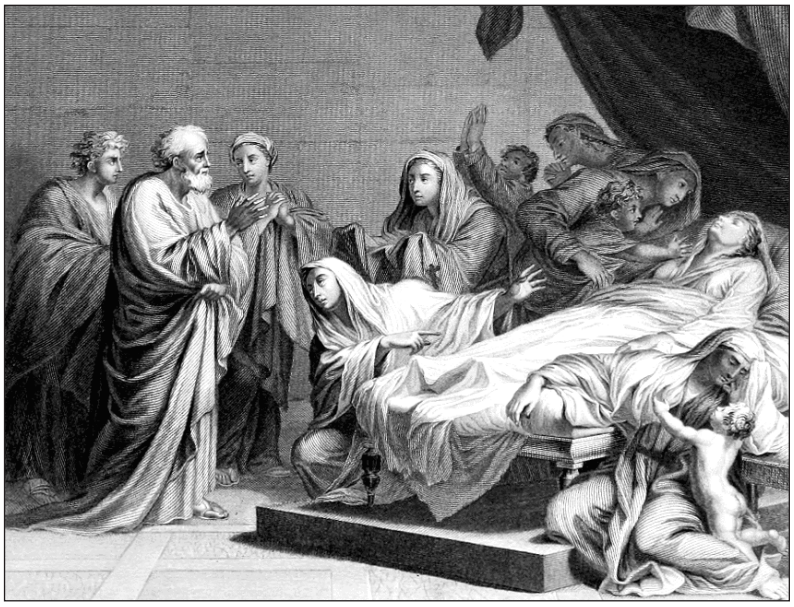
"These, tho their names appear
not on the scroll
Of martyrologists, laid down their lives,
No less a martyrdom in Jesus' eyes –
For his dear brethren's sake;
– watching the couch
Of loathsome sickness or of slow decay,
Or visiting the captive in his cell,
Or struggling with a burden
not their own,
Until their weary life sinks slow away,
These, too, are martyrs, brother."

Yes, all of the Lord's saints are to be martyrs; – their consecration is to lay down their lives in the service of the Lord, the brethren and the truth; and as nearly as they can understand in the way which he shall direct them, through his Word and his providences. Our covenant is not one of self-preservation, but one of self-sacrifice. True, we are looking for and hoping for a life eternal and glorious as spirit beings; but the terms and conditions upon which we are scripturally hoping to attain that perfect and new life are that we shall sacrifice what remains of this present earthly life. Another thought, that comes in this connection, is that while, undoubtedly, our chief service under present conditions is the ministry of the spiritual food, spiritual drink and spiritual clothing, to the household of faith, yet nevertheless we are to remember that to the extent of our abilities and opportunities we are to do good unto all men, as the Apostle enjoins.

Everyone of the Lord's saints should be recognized in his neighborhood as of generous heart, of kindly impulses; whether he have dollars to give, or only pennies. Of kind words at least he should be noted as a giver, remembering that it is more blessed, and more God-like, to give than to receive. And those who lack the wherewithal for generosity in this world's goods, so that they have nothing wherewith to minister in a temporal way, to the necessities of the saints or others, are not to forget that they have the still more precious, more valuable, more helpful, more cheering, consolations of the spirit of the truth, and kindness to dispense to such as are in any need. Would that all of the Lord's people would cultivate these Dorcas qualities, and thus become more and more beautiful and graceful in the eyes of their Lord, as well as in the eyes of the world!

Today, as the traveler passes from Joppa, going toward Jerusalem, the guide shows him on the outskirts of Joppa, at the side of the public road, a large, and at one time very beautiful and costly, monument to Dorcas. It is a fountain at which many weary ones have refreshed themselves. The narrative of Dorcas' good works and Christ-likeness, like the waters of a fountain, have come down the rugged channel of the centuries, – encouraging, refreshing, and stimulating God's people all the way. Nevertheless, quite probably some in her day spoke evil of her; perhaps even some who were the recipients of her favors may have declared that she performed her charities that she might glory in them, and to be seen and known of men, rather than for the love of those to whom she ministered: and such may be our experience, as we seek to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. But the fact that good may be evil spoken of must not deter us. We seek to please the Lord, and to cultivate in our hearts his spirit, and to exemplify this spirit before others, thus

letting our light shine: this is our only proper course, whatever may be said of it by the skeptical world, or an envious class of "tares." We are to seek chiefly the approval of our Father and our Bridegroom; – to be content therewith, and to be content with nothing less.



Peter sees Dorcas and the widows weeping over her

Apparently Dorcas took sick and died suddenly, at about the time that others of the saints at Joppa heard of Peter's being at Lydda and the cure performed there. They sent for him immediately; probably with no thought of his performing such a miracle as to bring Dorcas back to life; but rather with the thought that they had lost a highly esteemed member of their little group, and that Peter could give them some consolation at this time. There was no telegraph or telephone or mail service then, and some of the brethren became the messengers to take the word to Peter, – to request his presence, and that he would not delay. In the city of Jerusalem a corpse must be buried the same day, but in the smaller cities and villages they might remain as much as three days unburied. Peter's presence was wanted without delay, before Dorcas would be buried; and he went at once.

An affecting scene was before Peter as he entered the death-chamber. Poor widows and others were lamenting the loss of their friend, and showing the garments which she had made for them. That surely was a noble tribute to the usefulness of her life. No millionaire has ever left monuments which will endure so long, or which will reflect so much glory upon his character, as were left by this humble woman. And even the humblest and poorest of us may to some extent emulate this example and leave some such monuments of love and testimonies of appreciation behind us when we die. It is a sad end when any, especially of those who have named the name of Christ, die and leave none who sincerely, truly, mourn for them and miss them. It testifies to a life that was either selfish or misunderstood. We who are looking forward to the close of our earthly journey, and that before very long, should see to it that our lives are spent day by day in such a manner that some will be the happier for them; and that our decease will be recognized by some, at least, as a loss.

Peter's most notable miracle was the bringing of Dorcas back from the portals of death. Like the other miracle, it was peculiar to that time, and for the special purpose of the establishment of the Church. We are not to suppose that it was the Lord's intention that all of his people during this Gospel age should be thus snatched back from death, nor that they should be all relieved from beds of sickness, nor that they should all have powers such as the Apostle here exercised. There is a ministry of evil – of calamity, sickness, death, etc., – which has often been valuable indeed to the Lord's people, inculcating various lessons and developing various fruits of the spirit, meekness, patience, gentleness, etc. Let us after consecrating our all to the Lord, and while using our consecrated all as wisely as we know how, accept whatever divine wisdom shall mete out to us. Let us remember our Lord's words, – "The cup which my Father hath given (poured for) me, shall I not drink it?" – John 18:11.

"FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMS DEEDS" – R. 4335

ACTS 9:31-43

"And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed. And he arose immediately." – Acts 9:34

THE opening verse of our lesson informs us that after the persecution which scattered the Church (following Stephen's death) there came a lull and rest time. "So the Church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the holy Spirit, was multiplied." How much is here recorded in a few words! And how will the principles here set forth apply to the Lord's dealing with his people today? The Scriptures give us the illustration of the Lord's dealings with his people in the words, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest." (Deut. 32:11.) Thus does the Lord at times permit trials, persecutions, etc., which outwardly seem to imply the wrecking of most precious interests, and sometimes cause surprise to his people by the roughness and jarring conditions. Nevertheless, under Divine supervision, the stirring up of the nest and the throwing of responsibility upon his people can be made advantageous to them, strengthening, helping them. Then comes a time of rest and opportunity for spiritual edification, comfort, growth in grace and knowledge. Happy are those who, in the time of the stirring up of the nest, are rightly exercised by the Lord's providences and taught of him and made more and more active in his service – the service of righteousness, truth and love. It brings them preparation for the period of rest and development.

But to others who are not rightly exercised by the siftings, the shakings, the stirrings up of the nest, the experience is different. They are sifted out, alienated, and develop a hard spirit, foreign to the Lord, and out of accord with his Word. The one class goes on from grace to grace and from strength to strength; the other goes back into the outer darkness of the world. Thus, as the Apostle says, our message is a "savor of life unto life to some, but of death unto death to others." – 2 Cor. 2:16.

"THE SAINTS WHICH DWELT AT LYDDA"

This lesson gives a little insight to the condition of things in the early Church. The Truth was sufficiently unpopular to keep out the majority of those who love this present life and the praise of men more than the future life and the Divine approval. The edification, the comfort of the holy Spirit, and the walking in the fear or reverence of the Lord already mentioned (v. 31), is illustrated by the statement of verse 32, that St. Peter in his travels came to Lydda, to the saints who dwelt there. At that time, under those conditions, to be a Christian was to be a saint, a holy person, a sanctified or set apart person. And so it should be still. But, alas! popularity has brought under the name Christian not only wolves in sheep's clothing, but goats and ring-streaked and speckled and black sheep, as well as saintly ones. We are to remember, however, the declaration, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." Therefore, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" – depart from inequity (injustice) and from everything that is unrighteous (2 Tim. 2:19); in other words, let them all be saints, "For this is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification." – 1 Thess. 4:3.

We can, without pride or boastfulness, record that the number of saints for whom the light of Present Truth has an attraction are saintly, and also that it is leading the honest-hearted who receive it into a condition of consecration or saintship. The multiplying evidences to this effect, borne in upon us day by day and year by year, are comforting, strengthening assurances of Divine favor accompanying the Divine Word, just as we should expect. And more than this: The saintliness of heart seems to be increasing in lengths and breadths and heights and depths of Christian character. Incidentally, we remark, that nothing that has

been presented in these columns for many years seems to have been more helpful to the saintly and those seeking saintliness than "the VOW." We doubt if the same number of people, able and willing to take that Vow, could be found in all the denominations of Christendom. We believe that as saintliness progresses amongst our readers, our lists of those who have taken this solemn Vow, this solemn promise to the Lord in the name and strength of Jesus, will continue to increase, and that it will mean an increase of spiritual power and Christian grace and strength of character to them all.

At Lydda St. Peter found a palsied man bed-ridden for eight years. He was not one of the saints, for miracles of healing were rarely, if ever, performed by the Lord and the apostles upon believers. If sickness comes to those who are of the "household of faith," it is to be considered as of Divine permission, with a view to correction or to opportunities for growth in grace – as amongst the "all things" which shall work together for good to those rightly exercised thereby. The instantaneous healing of Aeneas was used of the Lord to advertise the Truth, after a manner not necessary at the present time. We read, "All that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw and turned to the Lord." The work at that time was of setting up the Church, bringing it into notice, establishing it, and gathering to it all "Israelites indeed" worthy of the Truth, worthy of being saved out of their own nation and the blindness and the trouble coming upon the same. The work of the present time is different. It is a gathering out of the wheat from the tares. We walk by faith, not by sight and by miracles.

"SHE WAS SICK AND DIED"

St. Peter stopped at Joppa, near to Lydda. There one of the saints took sick, but was not healed and died. Similarly Jesus healed many of the sick; but he allowed his special friend, Lazarus, to be sick and to die, without relieving the distress. As subsequently Lazarus was awakened from the sleep of death as an evidence of divine power and an evidence of Restitution times (Acts 3:19-21), so with Tabitha (Greek, Dorcas), she died, but, through St. Peter, the Lord awakened her from the sleep of death as a miracle and demonstration of the Divine power accomplishing the work of the Gospel message and making it forceful to the people.

A BEAUTIFUL CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Tabitha, in the Syrian language, then and there prevalent, signifies beautiful, and its Greek equivalent, which carries the same thought of beauty, signifies gazelle; the gentleness, the timidity and the bright, sparkling eye of the gazelle are the characteristics indicated by the name. We know not if the saintly woman revived from death was beautiful of face, but the account justifies us in acknowledging her to have been beautiful of heart, of character. The statement, "This woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did," tells us that she was beautiful in the Lord's sight and in the sight of all his saints – provided, of course, that her good deeds were prompted by love of heart. For we should always remember the Apostle's words, "If I should give my body to be burned as a martyr, or if I should give all my goods to the poor, yet have not love, it would profit me nothing" – it would be without esteem in the mind of him who searcheth the heart and to whom motives in those of this age are everything.

We read that "All the widows stood by weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them." These words remind us of our Lord's expression respecting another woman, "She has done what she could." Such mourners at the death-bed give eloquent testimony to saintship. It is not recorded that all of the widows were saints, and quite probably some of them were not, for St. Peter put them all forth while he prayed. We are to have in mind that while the saints are God's peculiar care and should, therefore, be likewise the peculiar care of one another, nevertheless we have in a broad, general

sense, a relationship to the entire world of mankind and whensoever we will may do them good. The Apostle urges us to "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." – Eph. 6:10.

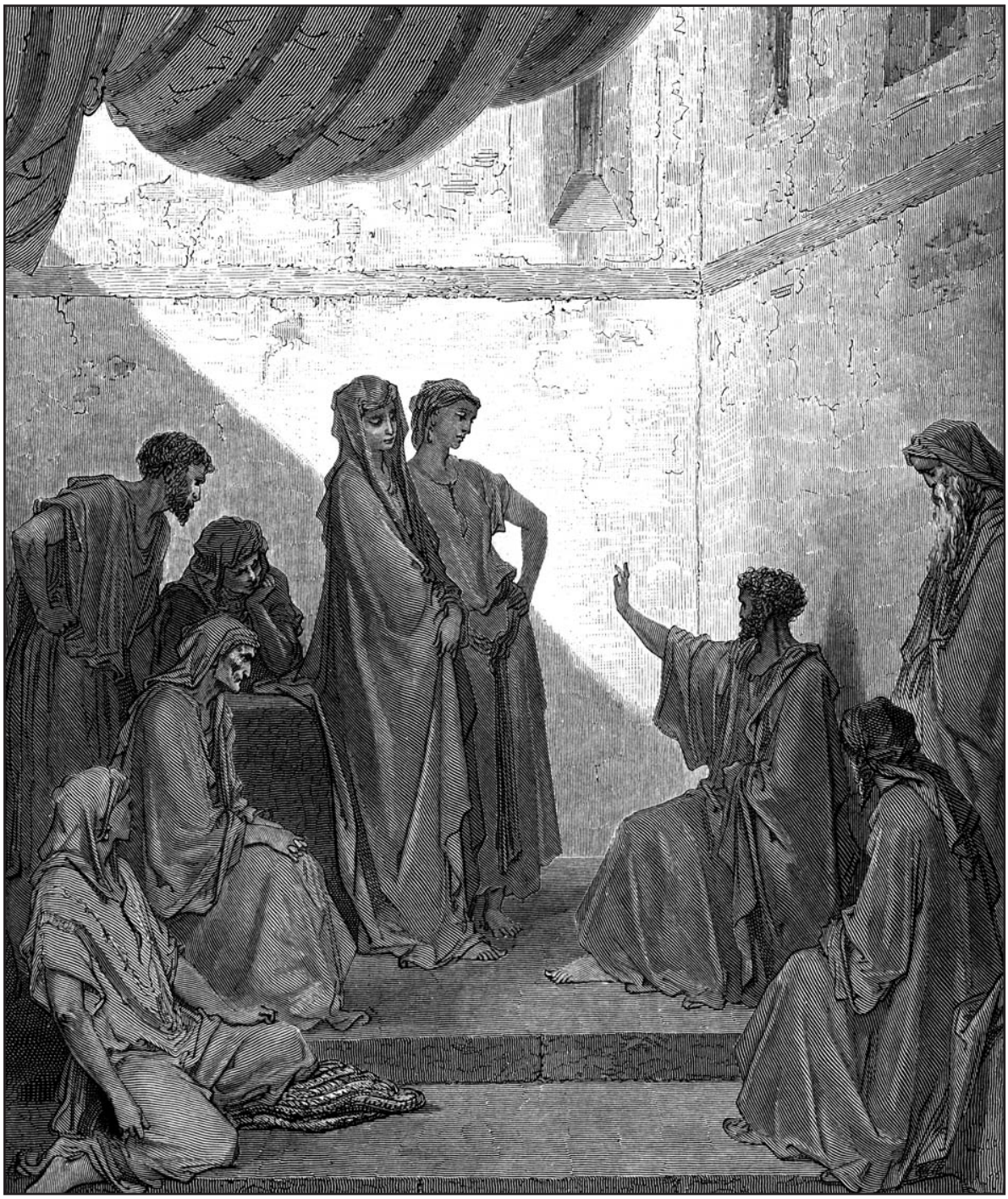
The widows of olden times had a peculiarly hard lot for various reasons; hence the frequent reference to them in the Scriptures as objects of charity. Under the civilized arrangements of our time, induced and fostered by the spirit of Christianity, good provision is made for widows and orphans and thus in some measure our opportunities for charity are diminished. Nor is it either Scriptural or wise to always pass by the provisions of civilization for the care of the poor, the afflicted widows and orphans, and to institute private benefactions, more expensive, and, in some cases, more troublesome, and, in some instances, less advantageous. The "saints" should seek upon this, as upon every subject, the spirit of a sound mind, which cometh from above. There are still, however, opportunities for the exercise of benevolence in matters temporal – and especially along spiritual lines. Few know of the heavenly manna of the Gospel. Few are able to prepare and to give to others the Bread that came down from heaven. Few are able to help sinners to wash and be clean, and to point them to the robe of Christ's righteousness and to assist them in putting it on, and to show them how it is to be kept "without spot or wrinkle" or any such thing.

Few are ready to counsel others on how to get rid of the spots and wrinkles if they do get these upon their robes – that the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord cleanseth us from all of our errors and misdeeds of ignorance. These are the real saints, and they should all be so diligent, so zealous, that when their "change" shall come, there may be many able and willing to praise God on their behalf, many living epistles, to be known and read of all men, and changed from knowledge to knowledge and from glory to glory, through their active assistance as brethren, as saints, as ambassadors for God!

THERE ARE LOYAL HEARTS

There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best shall come back to you.
Give love, and love to your heart will flow,
A strength in your utmost need;
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.
For life is a mirror of king and slave.
"Tis just what you are and do;
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.

– Madeline Bridge



St. Peter in The House of Cornelius, by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

Acts 10:1-2

ST. PETER AND CORNELIUS – R. 5879

ACTS 10:1-16,24-48

"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him." – Romans 10:12

CORNELIUS, the Roman centurion, was evidently converted to God and righteousness years prior to the incident which forms today's Study. Although he was a worshiper of the true God, a benevolent almsgiver, and although his love of righteousness and his consistent life were recognized amongst those with whom he had to do, yet something was necessary before he could be accepted of God in the proper sense of the word. There is a lesson here for those who imagine that a reverence of God and morality is all that is necessary to Divine acceptance. As Cornelius had these qualities in large measure for some time before his acceptance, the Lord's dealing with him may well be a guide for all who desire to approach Him in covenant relationship.

Although devout, as we have seen, Cornelius was not a Jew; and he realized that he was outside of the pale of Divine favor. Still he prayed to God. While we are not told for what he prayed, yet in harmony with the records we may readily suppose that he prayed for enlightenment respecting the Divine character and Plan, and for a closer approach and realization of Divine favor and acceptance.

Perhaps Cornelius had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and was perplexed on this very subject. Perhaps this perplexity led him to the earnest prayers which the Lord saw fit to answer in a miraculous manner, sending an angel to assure the centurion that his prayers and his alms were appreciated of the Lord as memorials of his piety. The angel intimated that something further than prayers and good deeds was necessary. But the additional things the angel was not commissioned to tell. Cornelius needed to know of the Lord Jesus from the true standpoint. He must exercise faith in our Lord as his Redeemer, before the memorials of his piety would count for anything with God or bring him into the desired relationship and under the Divine favor.

The angel instructed Cornelius to send for the Apostle Peter, and also informed him that certain ***words*** which St. Peter would tell him were of importance – essential to his further progress in knowledge and in faith, and through these into Divine favor. The centurion's readiness of mind is shown by the promptness of his obedience. He not only prayed, but prepared to cooperate with God in the answering of his own prayer.

The three persons sent to bring St. Peter down to Caesarea, all of whom feared God, give us good evidence that this Gentile, who was feeling after God and striving to the best of his ability to please and honor Him, had not been hiding his light under a bushel. It had shone out not only before his family and his servants, but before the soldiers under his control. This is the kind of man whom God delights to acknowledge, whatever may be his nationality or the color of his skin; and all such are recognized of the Lord and favored above others with light and truth – ever since the close of Natural Israel's special favor. There is a lesson here that some of the Lord's people need. It is that they should let the light of the Truth shine through them upon all with whom they come into contact; that the spirit of devotion should pervade every family, every household, including the servants.

Evidently Cornelius was full of faith in the Lord. He did not wait to see whether St. Peter would come. He knew that the Apostle would come. He had faith in the Lord's promises through the angel. Accordingly he gathered together his friends, his relatives and his household – those upon whom he had been exercising an influence. Apparently they were like himself – earnestly desirous of learning

all that they could concerning the way of life – the way of reconciliation and harmony with God. as well as all the principles which He represents.

END OF ISRAEL'S "SEVENTY WEEKS"

Meantime St. Peter, with all the prejudice belonging to the Jews for centuries, needed to be prepared to receive this first out-and-out Gentile brought into the Church. This was done by means of a vision. On the following day the Apostle, with six brethren from Joppa, went down to the centurion's home – "doubting nothing"; for evidently the Lord was leading him in the matter. Of all the disciples, St. Peter was the best one to be chosen for this work; first, because of his impetuous disposition and his zeal to follow the Lord's directions quickly and heartily; second, because, he being the oldest of the Apostles, and in many respects the most influential, his course would have the greater weight with the others.

It is difficult for us to conceive the prejudice which the Jews had entertained for centuries against any thought that the Gentiles might become fellow-heirs with them in the Abrahamic Promise. They considered it a settled matter that God's favor had been set apart to their nation; and that it could not possibly go outside of that nation to others, in the sense of making those others equally acceptable to God. These views were based upon three facts; first, God's Promise to Abraham, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"; second, the Israelites were not permitted to have general dealings with the Gentiles or to intermarry with them; third, added to all this, the Jewish rulers had to some extent exaggerated these differences.

But now a new dispensation had come. The "seventy weeks" of favor to Natural Israel had expired; and the Lord began to extend His favor beyond the Jews – as we have already seen, to the Ethiopian eunuch. According to Divine prophecy, these "seventy weeks," or 490 years, had been specifically set aside as a period of favor to the Jewish nation. It had been foretold that at the beginning of the last seven years, "week," of that period Messiah would come; and that in the exact middle of those seven years Messiah would be cut off in death, not for His own sins, but for the sins of the people. It had been foretold that the prophecy would be marked by the anointing of "the most holy" at Pentecost; and that the end of the seventieth week would also be marked as the termination of God's exclusive favor to Israel. It was so marked by the sending of the Gospel Message to Cornelius and by his begetting of the Holy Spirit, after he had believed the Message. – Daniel 9:22-27.

"WORDS WHEREBY THOU SHALT BE SAVED"

When St. Peter arrived at the home of Cornelius, the centurion recognized him as God's appointed servant for bringing this Message to him; and he prostrated himself at the Apostle's feet in worship. Instead of looking down upon the Jew, and instead of thinking of himself as a representative of the greatest government in the world, Cornelius was filled with the spirit of humility. The fact that his visitor represented the Lord called forth from him some of the same feelings that were filling his heart in respect to the Lord Himself – feelings of reverence.

But if Cornelius was noble and humble, the Apostle Peter showed himself to be no less noble and loyal to God; for at once he began to lift up the centurion, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." St. Peter commends himself to our hearts by this noble course, by this refusal to receive unauthorized homage. He saved himself also from a great deal of trial by thus promptly disowning supernatural honor and authority, by recognizing his true position – that he was only a broken and emptied vessel, distinguished only because the Lord had been pleased to fill him with the Holy Spirit and to use him as a vessel of mercy and truth.

Not many today are disposed to offer worship to fellow creatures; and not many – except high dignitaries of the nominal churches, such as popes and prelates – consent to receive worship. But all such have a rebuke in the course of St. Peter on this occasion. In our day there is little danger, perhaps, that any of the brethren would receive too much honor of men; for the spirit of our time is running in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, wherever a spirit of worship is manifest, it becomes the duty of the brother to whom it is offered to refuse it and to point to the Lord as the real Benefactor of us all – the One from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, by whatever channels He may be pleased to use.

Entering the house and finding a congregation of earnest, God-fearing Gentiles assembled, St. Peter asked the pointed question, "For what intent have ye sent for me?" Cornelius then related something of his past experience, his desire for fellowship with God, his endeavor to live in a manner pleasing to God, the vision that he had received, and now the Apostle's arrival in response to that vision, and his own expectancy that he was about to hear what had been promised him – "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." – Acts 11:14.

Cornelius was not saved by his almsgiving, not saved by his prayers, nor yet by the Message which St. Peter delivered. But the Apostle's Message – "words" – explaining matters, enabled Cornelius and his household to ***grasp by faith*** the great redemption which is in Christ Jesus – and thus to be saved. Saved at once from alienation from God, and from condemnation as sinners, they received a foretaste of the complete salvation to be granted unto them at the Second Coming of our Lord.

THE ONLY TRUE GOSPEL

We note with keen interest the Apostle's preaching, that we may clearly discern the life-giving Message which he brought and from which Cornelius and his associates derived their saving faith. St. Peter's discourse was the same Gospel Message which he had delivered repeatedly before. The theme was Jesus and the sacrifice for sins which He accomplished when He died on the cross. It was the Message of the hope of a resurrection from the dead through Christ Jesus, as attested by His resurrection by the mighty Power of God. It was the Message that, our risen Lord having appeared in the presence of God for the Church, the Father is now pleased to accept sinners on condition of faith, reverence, and obedience to righteousness according to ability.

St. Peter's discourse was "the old, old Story," which to many has become tedious and distasteful, but which to every soul in the right attitude is the Father's Message of forgiveness of sins and of reconciliation through the death of His Son. There is no other Gospel; and those who present another message are not, in their service, ambassadors for God, messengers and mouthpieces of His Holy Spirit. – Galatians 1:6-12.

The Apostle Paul tells us that "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21-25.) That is, it pleased God to adopt this method of declaring the Truth respecting His Plan of redemption and to accept and justify those who would believe and accept this testimony. Today the testimony may reach through letters, tracts or books, or through oral preaching. It matters not in what manner the true Message is delivered and received; but invariably the Message goes through the human channel, and not through angels nor by the operation of the Holy Spirit aside from human agents.

We are to bear in mind these lessons of God's methods and are to apply them in connection with the affairs of life. We are not to expect the Lord to move upon or instruct our friends or kindred or neighbors, but are to remember that He has conferred this honor upon His Royal Priesthood. Accordingly we are to be

not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord – serving the Truth in any and every manner open to us.

THE JUDGMENT OF QUICK AND DEAD

After telling the Message itself, St. Peter explained to Cornelius that Jesus had commanded His Apostles to testify to the people that it is He who was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. The coming judgment, or trial, of the world is an important part of the Gospel Message, and is not to be neglected in the preaching of the Gospel.

What advantage could accrue to the world through Christ's death if there were no future judgment or trial for them? All were judged once in the person of Adam; and his condemnation passed upon all. (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22.) The world needs no further judgment along the lines of the Adamic transgression and its weaknesses. The judgment for that transgression was complete, and nothing could be added. The Judge was Jehovah Himself; the sentence was death.

But now the Gospel includes the fact that Christ is to be the Judge of the world. This signifies that a new trial for life is to be accorded to Adam and his race. This fact of itself implies a release from the original death sentence, a redemption from Adam's sentence, and an individual trial to determine which members of the redeemed race will be accounted worthy of life everlasting. Yes; this is the "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people" – even though the Adversary has deluded the vast majority into thinking to the contrary – that no new trial such as Adam had at first is to be granted to the whole world, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

All are witnesses that this trial could not have begun before Jesus became the Judge. Hence none of those who had died during the four thousand years preceding His earthly ministry could have been judged by Him. None of them could have been on trial for life eternal. All should likewise be aware of the fact that the world in general has not been on trial since our Redeemer was appointed Judge, and that it is not on trial today; that, on the contrary, the great mass of the world neither knows the Judge nor understands the Law, nor has any conception of the requirements necessary to life everlasting.

This agrees exactly with St. Peter's statement under consideration and also with that of St. Paul, "God hath appointed a Day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." (Acts 17:31.) As the Apostle indicates, that Day was still future in his time; and it is still future. From other Scriptures we learn that this Day is the Millennial Day – "a Day with the Lord, a thousand years." The only judgment – trial – since our Lord's resurrection has been to the Church, to determine the question of life or death eternal. The Church, as Spiritual Israel, has had much advantage every way over the remainder of mankind; for during this Gospel Age this class are being "called of God according to His purpose" – that the more than overcomers may be joint-heirs with Jesus in His future work of judging the world. – 2 Peter 3:7,8; 1 Cor. 6:2.

THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES

Cornelius and his devout associates had been waiting for just such a Message of Divine grace; and as the words fell from the Apostle's lips, they were quickly and gladly appropriated in the hearts of his hearers, who were by this time accepting Jesus with the same fulness of appreciation as St. Peter himself. Their hearts being thus in the right condition before God, it would have been appropriate for the Apostle to say to them, "Now, brethren, your proper course will be to be baptized into Jesus by a water baptism, symbolizing your full consecration to be dead with Him, as His faithful followers."

But St. Peter was not ready to make such a

step, we may be sure. He was surprised that God was willing that the Gentiles should even know about the wonderful provisions of salvation in Jesus, which of itself would be a blessing. But he was not yet prepared to expect that the Gentiles would be received of the Lord on practically the same terms and with exactly the same manifestations of Divine favor as were the Jews. To make good his insufficiency of knowledge along this line – and as a lesson to him also – the Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius and his companions without the laying on of hands – in the same manner that it was bestowed upon the assembly in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

St. Peter quickly learned the lesson; and undoubtedly his readiness to learn it was in large measure due to his humility and sincerity of heart, the fulness of his consecration to the Lord and his desire that the Divine will should be done in every particular. The Apostle and his companions from Joppa – "they of the circumcision" – were astonished at God's favor upon the Gentiles. Yet they were not envious. They were glad to welcome as cleansed, as brothers, all whom the Lord indicated that He had received into His fellowship.

The result of this outpouring of the Spirit was a grand testimony meeting. The record is that they "magnified God," praising Him, rejoicing in their acceptance, etc. Then St. Peter drew their attention to the symbolical baptism and the propriety of observing it. We are not given his argument on the subject. Possibly he explained that in thus publicly symbolizing their consecration to the Lord they would be strengthening their own faith, buttressing their own determination to live and die the Lord's. Possibly, too, he showed them the beautiful significance of the water immersion as a symbol of death and burial with Christ and of a resurrection to newness of life in the present time, and to a newness of life in perfect bodies at the Second Advent of our Lord.

The Apostle then called for an expression from those present – especially from the brethren who accompanied him from Joppa – to know whether any objection could be thought of to show why these dear brethren should not be admitted to every blessing and arrangement which God had provided for His faithful ones – irrespective of their being Gentiles by birth. They had believed in God, had given evidence of their consecration and their good works, even before they knew of the Lord and His glorious Plan; and now they had been accepted of God, who had manifested His acceptance by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them. No objection being offered, St. Peter directed that they should be baptized in the name of our Lord. He had been sent to teach them, and he delivered his Message with no uncertain sound.

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.
45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.
46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,
47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 10:44-48

GOD'S ACCEPTANCE OF CORNELIUS – R. 2132

ACTS 10:30-34

"Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." – Acts 10:43

CORNELIUS, noted as the first adopted son of God from amongst the Gentiles, was a Roman soldier, the captain of a company quartered in Caesarea for the better preservation of order and the enforcement of the will of the Roman government, which, at that time, controlled Palestine. It may be that he was the very same Centurion mentioned in Luke (7:2-10) as a worthy, noble and generous man, of whom Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;" and whose servant was healed as a reward of this faith. True, that Centurion was stationed at Capernaum, while Cornelius we find in Caesarea; it is possible, however, that these bands of Roman soldiers were moved about from place to place as a better means of awing the people with a small number of soldiers. It would certainly be very remarkable to find two such Centurions of so remarkable a character residing so near together. And we are to remember that a period of about six years must have elapsed between the time of our Lord's healing the servant at Capernaum and the events we now consider.

The date of Cornelius' conversion cannot be positively determined from history, but from prophecy we may locate it with great positiveness in the year 36, A.D., because there the "seventy weeks" of Daniel's prophecy terminated. Our Lord was baptised at the beginning of the seventieth week (Oct., A.D. 29), was crucified "in the midst of the week" (April, A.D. 33). The seventy weeks ended the special favors of the Jewish nation (Oct., A.D. 36). That date, therefore, was the earliest at which it was possible for the gospel to be sent to the Gentiles.

It would appear that Cornelius had been in an acceptable attitude of heart before the Lord for some time. We may reasonably infer, therefore, that God delayed the sending of the gospel message to him for some particular reason. That particular reason, we see, was, that the full period of the "seventy weeks" (of years) must be confined to Israel, as it is written, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week," altho he was to "cut short the work in righteousness" (so far as the nation was concerned) "in the midst of the week." The "many," to whom the covenant was confirmed for the remainder (3½ years) of the seventieth week, consisted of those worthy Jews who, beginning at Pentecost, were specially taught, and thousands of them converted, during this remaining period of individual favor to the Jew. We may, therefore, presume that Cornelius, having been for some time in an acceptable condition of heart, the gospel went to him at the earliest possible moment – about Oct., A.D. 36.

We cannot properly speak of these experiences of Cornelius as a ***conversion*** or ***turning*** of his heart; for his heart was already in the right attitude, as was that of Saul of Tarsus. As the latter needed to have his knowledge ***corrected***, so the former needed to have his knowledge ***increased***; and then both needed to be accepted in the Beloved, – and to receive the spirit of ***adoption*** as "sons of God."

The testimony is that, at the time of receiving this great blessing of the truth, Cornelius was in the right attitude of heart to receive it: he was hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and was fasting and praying for it. What a suggestion is here! If all people could be gotten into a condition similar to this described of Cornelius, we might expect the conversion of the whole world speedily. The great difficulty in the presentation of the gospel is the unreadiness of the hearts of those who need it. This is true, whether of the savages of Africa or the philosophers of India and China, or the self-satisfied ones

of so-called Christian lands. They do not know the truth, and they cannot receive it, because their hearts are not prepared for it. And if the truth be received into any other than into a good and honest heart, it not only is not likely to bring forth a good harvest, but indeed may introduce a liberty (freedom from superstition, etc.) which may actually be unfavorable in its results. The constant effort of all, therefore, should be, not only to be in a proper attitude of heart themselves, but to see to it that those whom they approach with the truth are brought in contact not only with the knowledge and liberty which the truth carries, but also with its influence as a sanctifying and cleansing power.

In the vision granted to Cornelius the Lord commends **(1)** his prayerful attitude, which implied faith in God and a desire for harmony with him in righteousness; **(2)** his works of righteousness – his alms-giving, his endeavor to overcome selfishness and to copy divine benevolence. So we believe it is with all; whoever is in the right attitude of heart will be more and more moved to good works.

We have here also an illustration of divine methods; and we have every reason to believe that they are the same to-day. God did not miraculously fill the mind of Cornelius with a knowledge of the gospel and the details of the divine plan of salvation; – nor does he do this to-day, altho some of his children evidently so misunderstand his arrangement. On the contrary, the Lord made use of his servant Peter in communicating the truth, in teaching those who were ignorant of it. Men accordingly were sent a considerable journey to find Peter, and Peter journeyed with them the same distance in order to preach the gospel, rather than have any ***miraculous*** presentation of it.

The language of Cornelius, when Peter was come to his house, indicates an appreciation of the fact that the message was from God, and that Peter was merely the honored instrument. Cornelius, presenting himself and his household in the presence of Peter for instruction, said, "We are all here present ***before God***, to hear all things that are commanded thee ***of God***." Here was a proper respect for the servant of God as a servant of God and his Word; but also a full recognition that "every good and perfect gift cometh down from [our Father] above," and that the gospel itself is "neither of man nor by man."

It is safe to say that Peter, as well as Cornelius, received a great lesson from the Lord in connection with this visit. He was learning that, altho the divine favor and privilege of the gospel had been granted "to the Jew first," according to divine promise, nevertheless only true Jews could be acceptable with God, while "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is [now] accepted with him" – through the merit of the sacrifice given "once for all" by him who has since been highly exalted and made "Lord of all."

Peter presupposes on the part of Cornelius just such knowledge as we would expect of an educated and influential man at that time, particularly if he were the Centurion of Capernaum who had personal contact with our Lord. He says, You have heard about this preaching of Jesus all through your country here, the matter is public, no one could live in this vicinity without coming to a knowledge of these general facts. They may have heard the facts misstated to some extent and misrepresented, but in a general way all know that our preaching is concerning Jesus of Nazareth: that he was anointed of God, the Messiah; that he received the holy spirit and with it power; and that he used this power in doing good and healing all oppressed of the devil (through sickness, etc.), – all of which, either directly or indirectly, are traceable to sin and thus to the author of sin, Satan.

Having briefly rehearsed the matters which Cornelius already knew, the Apostle rehearsed some matters which were not so generally known, but denied as incredible; namely, that the death of Jesus was not like the death of others, but was a sacrifice; that this sacrifice

was acceptable with God as the ransom-price for sinners; and that God had "given assurance unto all men" (that the sacrifice was satisfactory and had been accepted on behalf of all men) by raising Jesus from the dead on the third day. – Acts 17:31.

We have heretofore seen that our Lord Jesus was not raised from the dead a fleshly being, a human being, but a spirit being, and that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." We have seen that, accordingly, no one could see him as the resurrected spirit being, except a miracle were performed, either by granting special powers to see a spirit being, or by our Lord's appearing in a body of flesh on certain occasions (just as angels had done previously) for the purpose of the better impressing upon the disciples the two facts; **(1)** his resurrection, **(2)** his change of nature which prevented his being seen, except as he would specially "***appear***" or "***manifest***" himself. Thus, Peter here declares that the people in general did not see the Lord Jesus after his resurrection, but that God "***showed him***," unto "***witnesses*** chosen before of God, even unto us."

Thus by these proofs of our Lord's resurrection God granted us the evidences of coming divine favor – proofs that Christ is empowered of the Father to be the Judge of all who are to be judged, the living (the angels who kept not their first estate and who are "reserved unto the judgment of the great day," and upon whom the death sentence has never yet been pronounced) and the dead (the world of mankind, "dead in trespasses and sins," and dead, in the sense that all are under the sentence of death).

The Apostle's discourse was orderly, and he next proceeded to show that all this was in harmony with what had been foretold respecting this long-promised Savior, Messiah. Then, completing his argument and bringing it down and making a personal application of it to his hearers, he showed that, the penalty of sin having been paid for all by the Lord Jesus, and all judgment of the sinners having been transferred to the hands of him who "bought us with his own precious blood," it followed that he had full power and authority to extend the terms and conditions of the New Covenant; namely, the remission of sins to all who believed in him as their Priest (Redeemer), their Prophet (Teacher) and their King (Ruler).

We are not surprised to find from the narrative that this man, whose heart was so ready for the truth, who was hungering and thirsting for it, fasting and praying to be in a condition for receiving it, was so ready that he appropriated the words of the Apostle as the bread from heaven and the water of life for which he had been hungering and thirsting. It does not surprise us, therefore, that God immediately, in view of his full consecration, accounted him worthy of "the spirit of adoption;" and not only so, but also gave him some of the outward manifestations or miraculous "gifts," similar to those granted to the believers on the day of Pentecost.

The Apostle Peter, as he subsequently testified to his fellow-disciples at Jerusalem, was astonished to see that God in every respect treated the converts from the Gentiles the same as the converts from the Jews; and dropping all prejudice Peter at once grasped the situation and did not hesitate to offer to Cornelius symbolic baptism as the evidence or pledge of his consecration to the Lord; assuredly gathering that whomsoever the Lord counted worthy of the holy spirit was worthy also of every other feature of the divine arrangement for the household of faith. With us also should it be the same: whoever we may find truly believing the gospel of redemption and forgiveness of sins through Christ, and consecrated to God's service in Him, – such, wherever found, are to be esteemed as brethren and fellowshiped to the full, whether or not they have seen every item of the truth now due. Further knowledge will come to the consecrated, and, as a fruit of it, obedience in every particular may reasonably be expected.

"GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS." – R. 2988

ACTS 10:34-44

MANY SEEM totally to misunderstand the Apostle's statement that "God is no respecter of persons"; – they apply these words in a very different way from that in which the Apostle used them. The Apostle perceived that God is a respecter of character; but that he is not a respecter of outward appearances, conditions, color of skin, nationality, etc. That this is the Apostle's meaning is evidenced by his next statement, "But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." It is a misapprehension, far too common, that anybody and everybody may come to the Lord upon terms of intimacy and familiarity. In consequence of such misapprehensions many approach the throne of heavenly grace without authority, without invitation, and without acceptance; – because (reversing the Apostle's words) they do not fear the Lord, are not workers of righteousness, and are not accepted with him. Lack of instruction, and misinstruction by Christians, are responsible for much of this wrong condition existing in nominal Christendom. Let us learn to follow carefully the Scriptural program and precedent; let us not give the misimpression that God is no respecter of character. Let us, on the contrary, as Peter did, point out that reverence for God is an essential; that an endeavor to live righteously is an essential, – a reformation of life, a turning from sin to righteousness; and that, even then, none can be acceptable to God except through the appointed way – faith in the atonement work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cornelius, the centurion, whose acceptance with God is the subject of this lesson, was evidently converted to God and to righteousness years prior to this incident. This is the testimony; – he was a worshiper of God, a benevolent alms-giver, and his love of righteousness and his consistent life were recognized amongst those with whom he had to do; yet, nevertheless, something was necessary before he could be accepted with God in the proper sense of that word. There is a lesson here for those who imagine that a reverence of God and morality are all that are necessary to divine acceptance. As Cornelius had these qualities in large measure for some time before his acceptance, the Lord's dealing with him may well be a guide for all others who desire to approach him in covenant relationship.

Altho devout, etc., as we have seen, Cornelius was not a Jew; and realized himself to be outside the pale of special divine favor. Still he prayed to God; – we are not told for what he prayed, but in harmony with the records, we may readily suppose that he prayed for enlightenment respecting the divine character and plan, and for a closer approach and a realization of divine favor and acceptance. Perhaps he had heard of Jesus and was perplexed on this very subject; perhaps this led him to the earnest prayers which the Lord saw fit to answer in a miraculous manner, sending an angel to him, assuring him that his prayers and his alms were appreciated of the Lord as memorials of his piety. (Verse 4.) The angel intimated that something further than prayers and good deeds was necessary; but the additional things the angel was not commissioned to tell. Cornelius needed to know of the Lord Jesus from the true standpoint; he must exercise faith in him as his Redeemer, before the memorials of his piety would count for anything with God, or bring him into the desired relationship and under the divine favor.

We know very well that the Lord could have promulgated the gospel through the instrumentality of angels; but here, as elsewhere, we see that this was not his purpose – that he was pleased to use consecrated human sons as his ambassadors, to proclaim the "good tidings of great joy – for all people." What a great honor God has thus done us who "were by nature children of wrath, even as

others" of the race, but who, having accepted divine favor in Christ, are not only "accepted in the Beloved" but are made the channels of divine blessing and favor in the calling out of others. The divine course in this respect has not only been an honor to his adopted children, but, additionally, it has been a blessing; – for what Christian does not know from experience that great blessing comes upon all who are faithful in serving the Word to others.

Cornelius was instructed to send for the Apostle Peter, and was informed in advance that certain ***words*** he would tell him were of importance; – essential to his further progress in knowledge and in faith, – and through these into divine favor. Cornelius' readiness of mind is shown by the promptness of his obedience. He not only prayed, but prepared to cooperate with God in the answering of his own prayer. The three persons sent (two of them household servants, and one of them a soldier, all devout persons, who feared God) give us good evidence that this Gentile who was feeling after God, and striving to the best of his ability to please and honor him, had not been keeping his light and his faith under a bushel. It had shone out before his family and servants, and before the soldiers under his control. This is the kind of man whom God delights to acknowledge, whatever may be his nationality or the color of his skin, and all such are recognized of the Lord, and favored above others with light and truth – ever since the close of typical Israel's special favor. There is a lesson here that some of the Lord's people need. It is that they should let the light of truth shine through them upon all with whom they come in contact, – that the spirit of devotion should pervade every family, every household, including the servants.

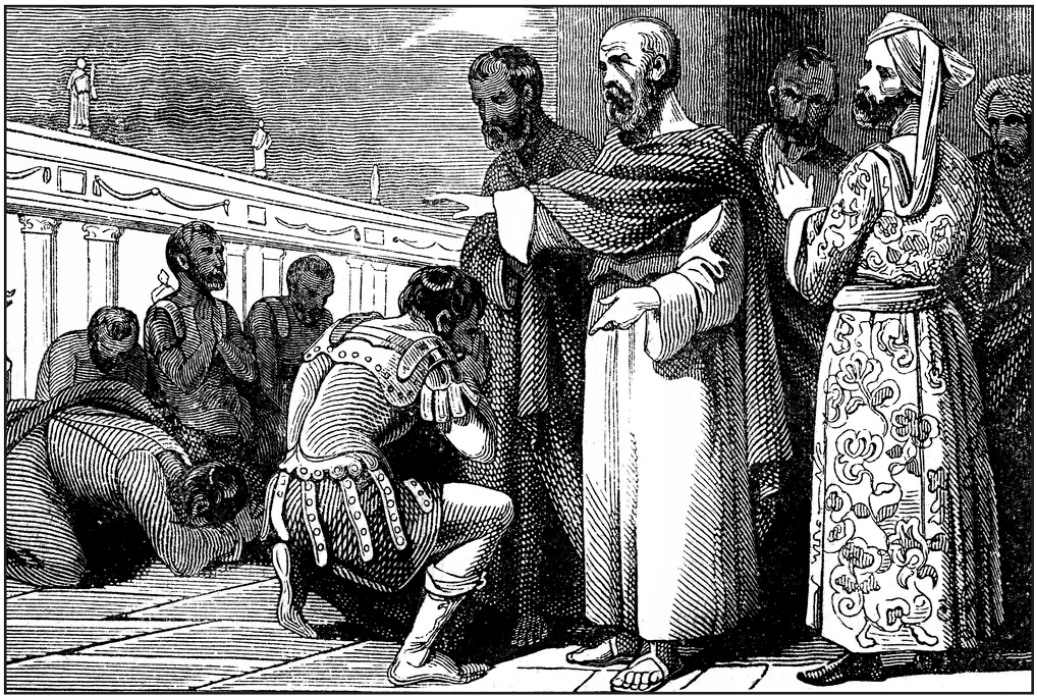
Evidently Cornelius was full of faith in the Lord. He did not wait to see if Peter would come; he knew that he would come; he had faith in the Lord's promises through the angel: accordingly he gathered together his friends and relatives and household – those upon whom he had been exercising an influence, and who, like himself, were pious and earnestly desirous of knowing all that they might learn concerning the way of life, – the way of reconciliation and harmony with God and all the principles of righteousness which he represents.

Meantime Peter, with all the prejudices belonging to the Jews for centuries, needed to be prepared to receive this first out-and-out Gentile brought into the Church. This was done by means of a vision, so that Peter, with six brethren from Joppa, came promptly to the centurion's home on the following day – "doubting nothing," because evidently the Lord was leading him in the matter. We see, too, that of all the disciples Peter was the best one to be chosen for this work, because of his impetuous disposition and zeal to follow the Lord's directions quickly and heartily; secondly, because being the oldest of the apostles, and in many respects the most influential one, his course would have the greater weight with the others. It is difficult for us to conceive the prejudice of centuries, in the minds of the Jews, against any thought of the Gentiles being fellow-heirs with them of the Abrahamic promises. They considered it a settled matter that God's favor had been set apart to their nation; and that it could not possibly go outside that nation to others, in the sense of making those others equally acceptable to God. These views were based, first, upon the promises of God to Abraham, "Thy seed," etc.; secondly, upon the fact that Israelites were not permitted to have general dealings with the Gentiles, nor to intermarry with them; thirdly, added to all this, the rulers of the Jews had even gone further, and exaggerated to some extent these differences.

But now a new dispensation had come; the "seventy weeks" of favor to Israel had expired; and the Lord began to extend his favor beyond the Jews – as we have already seen, to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch. We may readily suppose that those innovations, altho causing surprise to the apostles, would

be much easier for them to grasp than the extension of favor to the Gentiles: they perhaps paved the way to the latter. When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius, and the latter saw him and recognized him as God's appointed servant for the bringing of this message to him, he prostrated himself at Peter's feet in worship. How different Cornelius was from the majority of Romans, – especially of Roman soldiers and officers! Instead of looking down upon the Jew, – instead of thinking of himself as a representative of the greatest government in the world, at the time, Cornelius was filled with the spirit of humility, and the fact that his visitor represented the Lord called forth from him some of the same feelings that were filling his heart in respect to the Lord himself, – feelings of reverence.

But if the centurion was noble and humble, the Apostle Peter showed himself in response to be no less noble and loyal to God – for he at once began to lift up the centurion, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." (Verse 26.) Peter commends himself to our hearts by this noble course – by this refusal to receive unauthorized homage; and he saved himself also from a great deal of trial by thus disowning supernatural honor and authority promptly, – by recognizing his true position, that he was only a broken and emptied vessel, valuable only because of the filling of the vessel with the Lord's spirit; – distinguished only because the Lord had been pleased to use him as a vessel of mercy and truth. Not many today are disposed to offer worship to fellow-creatures, and not many, except high dignitaries in the nominal churches, such as popes and prelates, consent to receive worship; but all such have a rebuke in the course of the Apostle Peter in this case. There is perhaps little danger in our day that any of the "brethren" would receive too much honor of men, because the spirit of our time is running in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, wherever a spirit of servility is manifest, it becomes the duty of the brother to whom it is offered to refuse it; and to point his fellow-servant to the Lord, as the real benefactor of us all, – from whom comes every good and perfect gift, by whatever channels he may be pleased to use.



As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up. I myself am also a man."
Acts 10:25-2

"WORDS WHEREBY THOU SHALT BE SAVED."

Peter coming into the house, and finding a congregation of earnest God-fearing Gentiles assembled, asked the pointed question, "For what intent have ye sent for me?" (Verse 29.) Cornelius then related something of his past experience, his desire for fellowship with God, his endeavor to live in a manner pleasing to him, the vision that he had received, and now Peter's arrival in response to that vision, and his expectancy that he was about to hear what had been promised him – "words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." (Acts 11:14.) He was not saved by his almsgiving, not saved by his prayers, nor yet by the message which Peter delivered; but Peter's message, "words," explaining matters, enabled Cornelius and his household to ***grasp by faith*** the great redemption which is in Christ Jesus, – and thus to be saved. Saved at once from alienation from God and from condemnation, as sinners; a foretaste of the complete salvation to be granted unto them at the second coming of the Lord.

We note with keen interest the Apostle's preaching, that we may clearly discern the life-giving message which he brought, from which Cornelius and his associates derived their saving faith. We find that Peter's discourse was the same gospel message which he had delivered repeatedly before. It was Jesus – the good, the obedient – and the sacrifice for sins which he accomplished when he died on the cross. It was the message of the hope of a resurrection from the dead through him, as attested by his resurrection by the mighty power of God. It was the message that a ransom for sinners having been paid to Justice the Lord is now pleased to accept sinners on conditions of faith, reverence and obedience to righteousness according to ability. Peter's discourse was "the old, old story" which to many has become tedious and distasteful; but which to every soul, in the right attitude, is the Father's message of forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation, through the death of his Son. This is the same message which God is still sending by all who are his true ambassadors. There is no other gospel, and those who present another message are not, in their service, ambassadors for God, messengers and mouthpieces of his spirit.

The Apostle Paul tells us that "It pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe" – that is, it pleased God to adopt this method of declaring the truth respecting his redemptive plan, and to accept and justify those who would believe and accept this testimony. The testimony may reach people today through letters or tracts or books, or through oral preaching; it matters not in what manner; it merely matters that the true message shall be delivered, and received; but the message goes, invariably, through the human channel, and not through angels, nor by the holy spirit's power or operation aside from human agents. We are to bear in mind these lessons of God's methods, and to apply them appropriately in connection with the affairs of life. We are not to expect the Lord to move upon or instruct our friends or kindred or neighbors; but are to remember that this honor he has conferred upon his "royal priesthood;" and accordingly we are to be "not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;" – serving the truth in any and every manner open to us.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE QUICK AND DEAD

After telling the message itself, Peter explained to Cornelius that Jesus commanded the apostles to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. (Verse 42.) The coming judgment, or trial, of the world, is an important part of the gospel message; and is not to be neglected in the preaching of the gospel.

What advantage could accrue to the world through the death of Christ if there were no future judgment or trial for them? All were

judged once in the person of Adam; and his condemnation passed upon all. The world needs no further judgment along the lines of the Adamic transgression and its weaknesses. The sentence for that transgression was complete, and leaves nothing that could be added; – the Judge was Jehovah himself, and the sentence was death. And now the good tidings includes the fact that Christ is to be the Judge of the world – which signifies that a new trial for life is to be accorded to Adam and his race. This of itself implies a release from the original death sentence; it implies a redemption from Adam's sentence, and an individual trial to determine which members of the redeemed and to-be-tried race will be accounted worthy of everlasting life. Yes, this is "good tidings of great joy" for the world; – even tho the great Adversary has deluded the vast majority, even of Christians, into thinking to the contrary – that no new trial such as Adam had at first is to be granted to the whole world, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

All are witnesses that this trial could not have begun before Jesus became the Judge – hence that none of those who had died in the four thousand years preceding could have been judged by him; – none of them could have been on trial for eternal life. All should likewise be aware of the fact that the world in general has not been on trial since our Redeemer was appointed the Judge, and that it is not on trial today; – that, on the contrary, the great mass of the world neither knows the Judge nor understands the law, nor has any conception of the conditions and requirements necessary to life everlasting. This agrees exactly with the statement of Peter, under consideration; and it agrees also with the statement of the Apostle Paul, "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (Acts 17:31.) The appointed day, as the Apostle indicates, was still future in his day, and is still future in our day. That day, as we see from other Scriptures, is the Millennial day, "a day with the Lord, a thousand years." (2 Pet. 3:8.) The only judgment – trial – since our Lord's resurrection, which has resulted to any, determining the question of life or death eternal, has been to the Church. The Church, as spiritual Israel, has had much advantage every way over the remainder of mankind; because, during this Gospel age, it is being "called of God according to his purpose," – that the overcomers may be joint-heirs with Jesus in his coming work of judging the world. "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" – 1 Cor. 6:2.

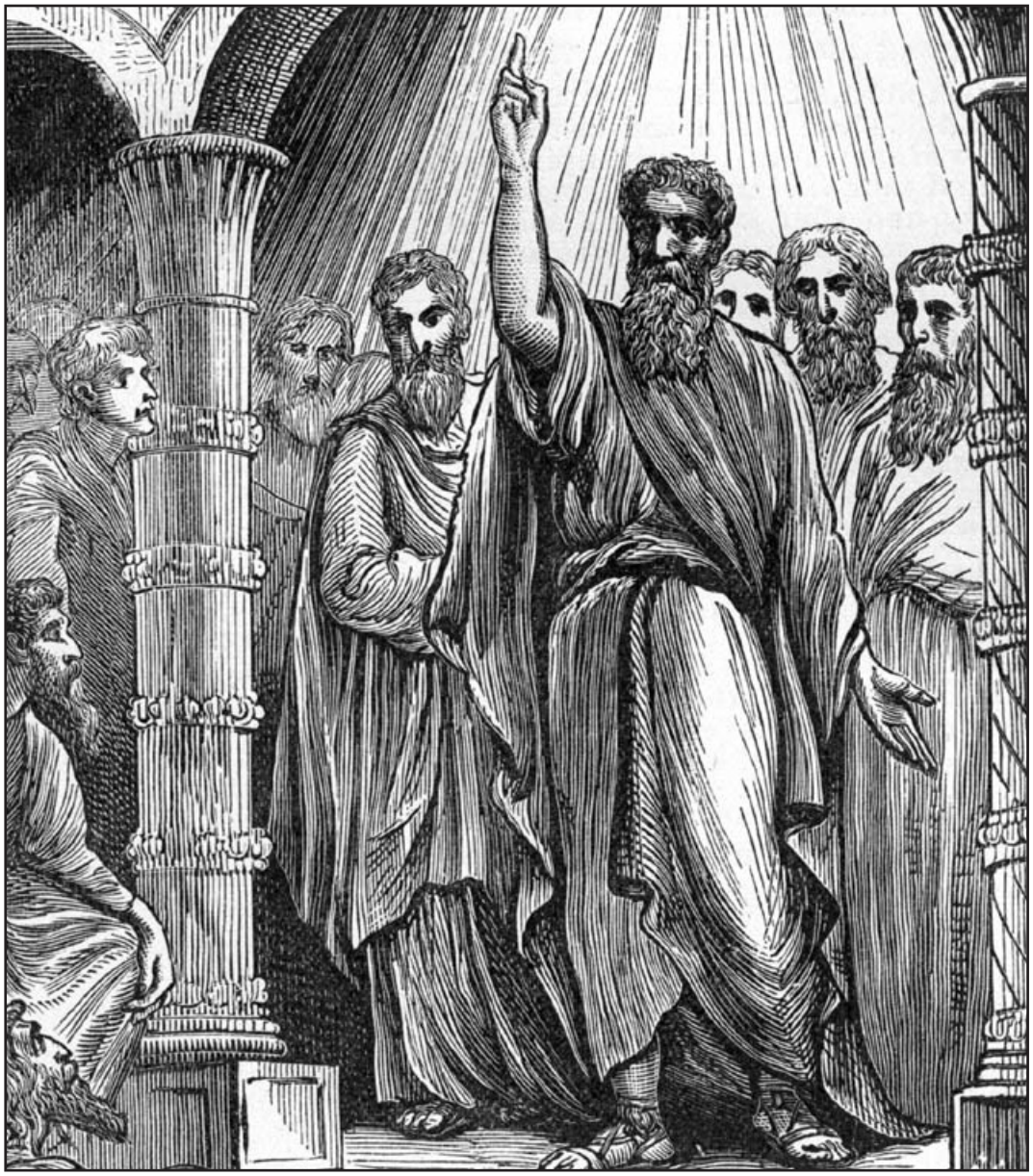
Peter, in discoursing on the matter, evidently had his mind more widely opened than ever before to a realization of what our Lord meant in giving the general commission to preach the Gospel, not merely to the Jews, but to whoever would have an ear to hear. Peter was not expecting "ears" amongst the Gentiles; but now he perceived that God was not a respecter of nations and features, etc., but that the message was open for all, and he did his best to present it. He proceeded to show that Jesus, as the Messiah, was not evidenced merely by the things connected with his ministry, and the ministry of his followers; but that all these things were foreknown to God, and planned, and foretold through the holy prophets of Israel, and that only in and through the name and merit of Jesus, – only to those exercising faith in him, was God pleased to show a reconciled face, and from such only was he willing to take away all sin and shame, and to adopt them into his family.

Cornelius and his devout household and friends had been waiting for just such a message of divine grace; and as the words fell from Peter's lips they were quickly and gladly appropriated in the hearts of his hearers, who were by this time accepting Jesus with the same fullness and appreciation as Peter himself. Their hearts being thus in the right condition before God, it would have been appropriate for Peter to have said to them, Now brethren, your proper course will be to be baptized into Jesus by a water baptism, – symbolizing your faith in him and your full consecration to be

dead with him, as his faithful followers. But Peter was not ready to take such a step, we may be sure. He was surprised that God was willing that the Gentiles should even know about the wonderful provisions of salvation in Jesus; which of itself would have been a blessing. But he was not yet prepared to expect that the Gentiles would be received of the Lord on practically the same terms, and with exactly the same manifestations of divine favor as were the Jews. To make good Peter's insufficiency of knowledge to baptize them, and to lay his hands upon them that they might receive the gifts of the spirit, – and as a lesson to Peter also, – the holy spirit was given to Cornelius and his companions without the laying on of hands – in the same manner that it was bestowed upon the assembly at Pentecost.

Peter quickly learned the lesson, and undoubtedly his readiness to learn it was in large measure due to his humility and sincerity of heart, the fulness of his consecration to the Lord, and his desire that the divine will should be done in every particular. Peter and his companions from Joppa, "they of the circumcision," were astonished at God's favor upon the Gentiles, yet they were not envious. They were glad to welcome as cleansed, as brothers, all whom the Lord indicated that he had received into his fellowship. The result of this outpouring of the spirit was a grand testimony meeting. The record is that they "magnified God," praising him, rejoicing in their acceptance, etc. Then Peter drew their attention to the symbolical baptism and the propriety of observing it. We are not given his arguments on the subject; possibly he explained that in thus publicly symbolizing their consecration to the Lord they would be strengthening their own faith; buttressing their own determination to live and die the Lord's; possibly, too, he showed them how beautiful is the significance of the water immersion as a symbol of death and burial with Christ; as a symbol also of a resurrection to newness of life in the present time, and to a newness of life in perfect bodies at the second advent of the Lord. Or possibly he merely contented himself with explaining to them that it was the Lord's own method of doing, and that he commanded that all of his followers should similarly be immersed.

Having called for an expression from those present – especially from the brethren who accompanied him from Joppa – to know if any objection could be thought of why these dear brethren, who had believed in the Lord, who had given evidence of their consecration and good works, even before they knew of the Lord and his glorious plan, and who now had been accepted of God, and his acceptance manifested – why these should not be admitted to every blessing and arrangement which God had provided for his faithful ones – irrespective of their being Gentiles by birth. No objection being offered Peter commanded [directed] them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. He had been sent to teach them, and he delivered his message with no uncertain sound. Similarly the Lord directs all of his people, all who have an ear to listen and to hear his message, through the Apostle Peter, in this lesson. We command no one, for we have no authority; we are not apostles. We can merely point out the command of the apostle; the example of all the apostles; the example of our Lord, etc., and leave the matter with the "ear" and conscience of each. Indeed, where we recognize that the true immersion of the will, into the will of Christ, has been accomplished, we may properly recognize the brother or sister in full fellowship, even tho he or she has not performed the outward symbolic immersion in water; because we are living in a time when great confusion on this subject prevails, and when it would be improper that we should cast off, reject, or even temporarily disfellowship any brother or sister who gives evidence of having had the real antitypical baptism into Christ. For a general examination of the question of Baptism, see our issue of June 15, 1893. A copy supplied free on application.



Peter defends his actions

"If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Acts 11:17-18

NOTING DISPENSATIONAL CHANGES – R. 2995

ACTS 11:4-15

"Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." – Acts 10:43

THE NEWS of Peter's visit to Cornelius and the baptism of the latter, a Gentile, into the Christian Church, created quite a hubbub – not in Jerusalem only, but throughout Judea. Peter may have been called to Jerusalem by the brethren to give some explanation of such an innovation; – or, learning of the commotion, he may have gone voluntarily to explain the situation and to set the minds of the brethren at rest respecting the propriety of his course. He took with him the six of the Joppa brethren who had accompanied him to the house of Cornelius. This was a wise course; Peter recognized that however well satisfied he himself might be respecting the propriety of what he had done, it was but just to the brethren to give as explicit a testimony on the subject as possible – to avoid the least ground for criticism or division of sentiment in the Church.

We note the divine providence which guided in this matter – that **(1)** it was Peter, the eldest, and in some respects the strongest of the apostles who was chosen for this service; and **(2)** that he was guided in judgment in respect to taking with him six of the prominent Joppa brethren. Thus does the Lord supervise the affairs of his people, while yet leaving the matter without a special direct revelation – teaching them rather by their experiences and his providential leadings. He could have sent an angel to the apostles, at the appointed time, to inform them definitely that the "seventy weeks" of Israel's favor had expired; and that now, in harmony with the divine plan, the gospel was to be preached not to Jews only, but to people of any or every nation who might be found with "ears to hear" – with hearts to appreciate it. But to have made such a revelation would have had three disadvantages; **(1)** the Church would thus be caused to walk by sight rather than by faith; **(2)** a precedent would have been established under which at any future time the Lord's people would have been warranted in expecting miraculous instruction, and thus their minds would have been diverted from the Scriptures which God intended should be the light upon our pathway; **(3)** miraculous instruction is opposed to thought, reflection and examination of underlying principles – so important to the progress of the Lord's people in grace and in knowledge.

We should not be surprised that the apostles would be opposed to Peter's going to the Gentiles with the gospel message; such a course was contrary to all the traditions of their nation for over sixteen centuries – seemingly in contradiction of many of the statements of the prophets: prudence, therefore, bade them beware lest the new light and blessing which they had received should mislead them into too great liberty – into license contrary to the Lord's Word. They probably called to mind that the promises indicated that God's blessings were to come to the world through Israel – "the forces of the Gentiles should come unto thee" – the "sons of strangers shall build up thy walls" – "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish," etc. They may also have recalled our Lord's words at the beginning of his ministry when sending forth the apostles, and subsequently, the "seventy," he said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; for I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." – Matt. 15:24.

In view of these things the apostles and brethren did only their duty in calling Peter to account – in seeing to it that they took no liberty with the Lord's directions – that they did not attempt to get beyond, or to circumvent his arrangements. They did realize that a change of dispensation was upon them, and that in some important sense Israel was rejected by the Lord, so that only the remnant accepting Christ were now in divine favor; but

they did not realize fully what this meant, nor see clearly how the Lord's promises centering in Israel were yet to be fulfilled. We can see now, in the light of providential leadings and apostolic teachings, and in the light of prophetic fulfilment, what it was not possible for them to see clearly at that time.

We can see that natural Israel was being rejected, – blinded with a blindness which would last for nearly nineteen centuries. We can see God's purpose to elect, in the interim, the spiritual seed of Abraham; taking, firstly, from the natural Israelites all found worthy; and secondly, completing the election with chosen ones selected from among the Gentiles – possessing the spirit of Abraham, the spirit of faith and obedience. We can see, that this Spiritual Israel was not fully explained through the promises and through the prophets; but that the elect church in the prophecies was counted in the Messianic promises – as members of the body of Messiah of which Jesus is the Head, "God blessed forever." (Rom. 9:5.) We can see, that not until this body of Messiah shall be complete will the Lord's promises to natural Israel have fulfilment; – then their blindness being turned away (Rom. 11:26-32), they will become the leading nation of earth, representative of the spiritual Kingdom of God, the glorified Church, the Messianic body: then the forces of the Gentiles will come to them, and all earthly interests will co-operate, and a blessing through Israel shall proceed to all the families of the earth.

THE CHARGES AGAINST PETER

It is rather peculiar, that the charges made against Peter were not that he had recognized Cornelius as a Christian and baptized him and his household, but that he had gone into their house and had eaten bread with them – proceedings which were contrary to Jewish custom entirely – the recognition of the Gentiles as being on an equality with the Jews – a matter which had been settled to the contrary with them, from time immemorial. Singularly, too, the Apostle Peter in his defense entirely ignored their charges and proceeded to acquit himself as though they had charged him in the way we would have expected – with receiving a Gentile into Christian brotherhood. Yet Peter's course was just the proper one, and, undoubtedly, he was guided thereto. There is a lesson in this for the Lord's people to the effect that it is always better to discuss fundamental principles and divine laws than to dispute over traditions of men and mere technical observances, customs, etc. When Peter got the fundamental features straight before the minds of all, the question of social customs was settled; whereas, if he had discussed the proprieties of the social custom, the larger question would still have been unsettled.

Peter's simple, humble, unvarnished explanation was a rehearsal of the facts in the case. He considered that the evidence which had convinced him that he was right, would similarly convince the others; and he was correct in this. He might on the contrary have "stood on his dignity" and have insisted that what he did was none of the business of the others – that he was an apostle and the eldest of them, and specially guided of the Lord; and that the Lord had even declared in advance that he should have and use the keys of the Kingdom; and that as he had used the first of these in announcing the divine favor on the day of Pentecost, so now he had used the other in opening the door of favor to the Gentiles. Such a course while it would have had a great deal of truth in it, would have been an unwise one to say the least; – the humbler, kinder, more brotherly course he did take speaks well to us of his heart condition, his humility, his love to the brethren, his desire to make matters so simple, so clear, so explicit, that none could have any occasion for stumbling over his action. Had he been arrogantly disposed, a great breach in the church might have resulted; – but no; the Lord was at the helm, and had Peter been out of proper condition of heart would not have used him, but some humbler brother for this service. There is a good lesson in this for us all – especially for such as are

chosen leaders of the various little companies of the Lord's people: the lesson is, humility, brotherly kindness, love. Any appearance of haughtiness, anything dictatorial in manner or tone would be unbecoming in any of the Lord's people, but especially so in any seeking to serve him: leaders manifesting a haughty spirit should be considered, in that respect and degree, unsuited to the position they fill, – while those who manifest the humbler manner and spirit of Peter on this occasion, should be proportionately the more esteemed by all.

Peter rehearsed his experiences, the Lord's leadings, going into the smallest details, so that the brethren might have the benefit of the situation as fully as though they had been in his stead; and to their credit, the record says, that, when they had heard the particulars, so far from further murmuring against Peter or finding fault with his course, they glorified God. This shows us clearly that their opposition to the extension of the gospel favor was not the result of any narrowness or meanness of heart; but was the result of conscientious conviction respecting the divine program. They were gradually learning the lesson that a new dispensation was being ushered in, by divine providence, and their entire anxiety was that they might run no faster than the Lord's spirit, through his Word and providences, would direct them – glad, however, to note the leadings and to receive the lessons and to act accordingly.

Similarly, we today are living in a time of changing dispensations; similarly, the Lord's providence is now guiding his people to a clearer appreciation of his plan – to a discernment of certain changes of dispensation now in progress: First, that as in the end of the Jewish age the nominal systems of fleshly Israel were rejected of the Lord, and ignored, so now the nominal systems of spiritual Israel are rejected of the Lord, and all "Israelites indeed" are being gathered out of them. Second, as it was a difficult matter for the Jews to realize that divine favor would extend beyond their nation to the Gentiles, so now it is a difficult matter for Christian people to comprehend that divine favor does not end with the election of the Christian Church; but that, on the contrary, the blessing of all the families of the earth must there begin; and that the new dispensation, the Millennium, in which this favor to the world is to be bestowed by the Church, is nigh, even at the door. As Peter was patient in his explanation of the Lord's providence and leadings in respect to the greater lengths and breadths of divine favor, so now it behooves all of the Lord's people to be very patient, very gentle, and as wise as serpents in presenting to their fellow Christians, true Israelites, the evidence which the Lord's providence has furnished to us, in respect to the world-wide blessings and their nearness. Our Lord's words are applicable, "Be ye wise as serpents, harmless as doves." – Matt. 10:16.

Peter explained to his hearers the simple gospel message which he had presented to the Gentiles, and which they had so gladly received; that it was in no sense a perversion of the message preached to the Jews, and in no degree were any of the gospel's conditions modified to win Gentile approval; it was the same gospel that had blessed them which now refreshed and blessed the Gentiles. He told them of his surprise when the Lord manifested his favor toward the Gentiles by bestowing some of the gifts of the holy spirit upon them – similar to those bestowed upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost, and subsequently transmitted through the apostles. He declares that this manifestation of divine favor called to his mind the words of the Lord, "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the holy spirit." (Acts 1:5.) By this he understood clearly that the holy spirit baptism was of much greater importance than water baptism; and he understood, further, that only the "***you***" class would be baptized with the holy spirit; and hence he could not logically ignore the fact that the Gentiles having received the same spirit must be in the Lord's estimation reckoned as members

of the same body of Christ, and eligible to baptism, etc. He concluded his argument with a question which must have appealed to all of his hearers; "Who was I that I should withstand God?"

The whole company agreed, that Peter would have had no right to withstand the will of the Lord; but that every propriety called upon him to conform his teachings and his conduct to the Lord's arrangements; and so under this wise presentation the entire company came into full harmony of heart and mind, on an important subject which, had it not been properly handled, might have meant rending and discord in the early Church, and have made two or more factions of those who were at heart desirous of being right and in accord with the Lord's will. Let us each and all resolve to follow Peter's example in every such matter, and thus to study the welfare, the best interest, the peace, of Zion.

The decision of the conference was, that the evidence educed by Peter was unquestionable, that a new step in the divine plan had been taken, and that henceforth God had granted to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews the privilege of "repentance unto life." Very properly none of them thought of calling into question God's right, God's privilege in this matter of granting repentance unto life. These faithful brethren were not disposed to run into either of two extremes common to some today – they neither claimed that God was bound to give his favors only to Israel, nor on the other hand did they claim that he was bound to make a free offer of repentance unto life to everybody alike. Some today go to even a greater extreme than this, claiming not only an opportunity for repentance unto life to all, but that God must eventually and everlastingly save all – grant all everlasting life. Let all the Lord's people beware that they do not attempt to dictate to the Almighty; that they recognize him as a sovereign, and seek to know his will, and not to dictate according to their wills.

The brethren evidently drew the lesson which the Lord wished them to draw; namely, that God was thenceforth willing to grant forgiveness of sins to Gentiles as well as Jews who would repent and seek to be in harmony with him. There is no suggestion in this of coercion nor of acceptance upon any other condition than repentance and pardon of sins; and this implies faith in the Lord Jesus and in his work as the ransom for sinners, and turning to God with full sincerity of heart, to know and, as far as possible, to do those things which would please him. This is still the position of the Lord's people and must be to the end of the age; it is the established principle underlying all of the Lord's dealings and promises.

Our Golden Text is in full accord with this. The remission of sins, typically, year by year, was Israel's favor only, for centuries; and when the real sacrifice for sin had been offered, the privilege of repentance unto remission of sins, tho confined for a time (three and a half years) to the Jews was thereafter thrown open to all alike – "He that hath an ***ear*** let him hear" the message. There is no other means of approach to God than through the remission, the covering of our sins; and there is no other means of covering than through faith in the precious blood of Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." All suggestions therefore of salvation without a belief in Jesus, – all suggestions of salvation of the heathen in ignorance, all suggestions of their being no necessity for a knowledge of the historic Christ, – all suggestions that a recognition of the Christ spirit of righteousness is sufficient, – all suggestions of harmony with God through any other than the one, appointed, "Mediator of the New Covenant," – receive a thorough condemnation in the words of this text. The entire plan of God sets forth and honors not only divine justice, wisdom, love, and power, but it likewise sets forth and honors the Lord Jesus as the only way by which, access may be had to the Father, and by which everlasting life may be attained by any. In view of these

limitations, how comforting are the assurances of the Scriptures, that for the vast majority of our race the time of knowledge and, hence, the time of probation for everlasting life is future; during the Millennium. In that, their "due time," all the deaf ears shall be unstopped and all shall hear the voice of the Son of Man (and his Bride, glorified) directing in the right ways of the Lord; – "and they that hear [obey] shall live." – It is a further cause of joy that this blessing and opportunity for resurrection to perfection, under the judgments of such gracious judges, is to extend also to "all that are in their graves." – John 5:25,28; 1 Tim. 2:6.

"THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS AT ANTIOCH" – R. 2997

ACTS 11:9-30

"The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

ANTIOCH, at the time of our lesson, was the third city in the world in rank of commercial importance and population, the latter being estimated at 500,000. Its situation was about 300 miles north from Jerusalem, – a long distance in those days of foot and camel and sailboat traveling. It is noted as being the first city outside of Palestine in which a Christian church assembly was formed; and indeed, we might say that as Jerusalem was the center of influence in Palestine, so Antioch became a center of influence as respected the gospel amongst the Gentiles. It seems that the start of the work of the Lord at Antioch, the little spark of light and truth which started that important work, resulted from the persecution at the time of Stephen's death. Some of those forced out of Jerusalem by the persecution settled in Antioch, and, of course, they could not live and walk in the light of the gospel without letting the light shine out for others. This at first was done only toward those who were of the Jewish faith, for in a large commercial city such as Antioch there were sure to be large numbers of Jews. We know not how many of these were reached with the gospel; but it was confined to them, surely, until the end of Israel's seventy symbolical weeks – until A.D. 37. At the same time that the Lord was sending Philip to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian eunuch, and opening the door to the Gentiles through the Apostle Peter, he was ready to open the door to the Gentiles everywhere; and under the leading of divine providence some of the Christian Hebrews got the proper thought at the proper time, – that a Gentile who would receive the Lord Jesus, and conform his life to his teachings, could be classed as a disciple equally as tho he had been born a Jew. The work thus started amongst the Gentiles at Antioch spread considerably, the Gentiles seeming to take more notice of it than had the Jews to whom the gospel was first preached, and, as our Golden Text assures us, large numbers believed. There is a lesson here, to the effect that while the Lord made clear to the apostles first the matter of receiving the Gentiles into the Church, he, nevertheless, did not confine his message to them, but was willing to use any convenient disciple, no matter how humble, as a mouthpiece for the truth, and was pleased to bless the consecrated ambassadors and their service. So today let each and all of the Lord's people be alert to notice opportunities for service, and let those who occupy a position as teachers in the Church emulate the example of the apostles, who manifested no spirit of jealousy in respect to this broadening of the work – rejoicing, rather, at the spread of the

good news by whatever instrumentality the Lord might be pleased to use. This is the true spirit of discipleship, the spirit of humility. It is in accord with the Apostle's words, "In honor preferring one another;" "Rejoice not in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth."

The news of the gospel going to the Gentiles at Antioch, and that large numbers were turning to the Lord, reached the Church at Jerusalem – the head-center of the Christian work, so to speak. The apostles and all of the brethren had already been prepared by the Lord's manifest dealing in the case of Cornelius, and this, undoubtedly, would take away from their surprise and largely correct any prejudice on the subject of the Gentiles as fellow-heirs of the promises which had previously pertained to them alone. Nevertheless, we note that the record does not say that this news caused rejoicing in the Jerusalem Church. We may infer, therefore, that they heard with some considerable trepidation that large numbers of the Gentiles were attaching themselves to the faith, and may have reasoned that this would have an injurious effect upon the cause they loved to serve – inasmuch as the Jews would say, Yes, your message is good enough for the barbarians or the Gentiles; it takes hold of the non-religious; but it attracts very few of the deeply pious of God's chosen people, to whom belong the promises and the covenants of the Lord, etc. It would appear, then, that the original motive in sending Barnabas to Antioch (visiting other intermediate churches en route) was that he might see and judge of the true condition of things, and give some report as to whether the new converts were worthy in their lives and characters to be recognized as fellow-heirs with the saints. Barnabas, when he had come, took note of "***the grace of God***," manifested amongst the believers at Antioch – it must have been manifested not only in their faith in the Lord as their Redeemer and Master, but also in their conduct as disciples or followers of Jesus. It is written, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure," and we may suppose that Barnabas quickly discerned the cleansing and sanctifying power of the truth amongst these believers at Antioch, and thus realized that the cause, instead of being hindered by such accessions, would be honored. We read that he was glad; and we may assume, altho it is not stated, that he promptly made a report to the brethren at Jerusalem, and that they were glad also. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, is always made glad by evidences of God's grace operating in himself and in others. It is one evidence of the possession of the holy spirit, and that in good measure, when we rejoice in all good things – "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." – Phil. 4:8.

The apostles evidently made an excellent choice when they sent Barnabas. We remember that he was a Levite by birth, and this, unquestionably, would make him very careful of every Jewish interest connected with the faith, and, undoubtedly, he was well learned in the Law. We remember, too, that he was a native of Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, near Antioch. Born thus at a distance from Jerusalem, amongst Gentiles, he was probably a broadminded man, as well as familiar with the dialect of the people of Antioch, and added to these good reasons for sending him, was a fourth; namely, his beautiful character, his helpfulness as a brother and a teacher in the Church. We remember that he sold a part of his property in the interest of the poor in Jerusalem. We remember, too, that he received the name Barnabas as a title of love and respect in the Church, which thus designated him "a son of consolation," a "helper." The fact that this good man was glad, is an assurance to us that the conditions he found in the Antioch Church were good conditions, for a good man "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Barnabas at once overflowed toward the

Antioch brethren, and in the same comforting and helpful manner as at Jerusalem he ***exhorted*** them all. The Greek word here is from the same root as his name, and signifies comfort, stimulation, assistance. No doubt he saw various things needing to be corrected; but instead of beginning with fault-finding, instead of lacerating their feelings and chiding them, he began, properly, by acknowledgment of what he saw in them as a cause for rejoicing. His comforting message was to the effect that they should cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart. The word "cleave" here in the Greek signifies to glue, to adhere. He wished the dear brethren, new in the truth, to see to it that their hearts were firmly united unto the Lord, that their minds were fully made up, that their consecration to him was complete. This was the matter of first importance. Later on he might show them kindly, gently, certain weaknesses of the flesh to which they were addicted; or their hearts being more firmly united to the Lord they might very speedily see these inconsistencies of themselves, without a word being said. The point we would impress is that it was not a restraining of the flesh, nor a perfecting of it, that was sought, but a much deeper work of grace than this; a purity of heart, of intention, a heart-adhesion to the Lord. We today cannot do better than follow this same course in our endeavors to do good unto others as we have opportunity. The brethren needed strengthening rather than tearing. They needed building up in the most holy faith and love. They needed encouraging in heart-adhesion to the Lord, and that criticisms of the flesh come in afterward gradually and very carefully and kindly. There were three elements co-operating which made Barnabas so suitable a person for this service, and the same three elements in any of us today will surely make us able ministers of the truth. Those elements are stated here; viz., "He was a good man [moral, upright, reverential] full of the holy spirit [he had not received the grace of God in vain; it was in him a living power, the new mind guiding and controlling in all of his affairs] and of faith." However good a man may be, and however much of the Lord's character and spirit he may have, faith is essential. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Let us strive to have all of these qualifications in our ministry, that we may be true sons of consolation, helpful in the Lord's service, and to his people wherever we may be. No wonder we read that as a result of his labors at Antioch much people was added unto the Lord!

The last we heard of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:30) was that after the opening of the eyes of his understanding, after he became the disciple of the Lord Jesus, and had preached in Damascus, and then in Jerusalem, his life being endangered the brethren sent him down to Caesarea, and then probably by ship to his native city, Tarsus. We are not informed regarding the nature of his work in his home city, but can readily suppose that one of his character and disposition would not long remain idle. And if the sphere of outward activities was a narrow one we may be sure that his mind was active in the study of the divine plan, and that his great heart was active too, in comprehending the divine grace and considering ways of service. He was in Tarsus while Barnabas was at Antioch, and the latter now had in mind the talents, the force, the logic, of Brother Saul, whom he had met in Jerusalem, and he concluded that Tarsus being not very far from Antioch he would look him up, interest him in the service of the Antioch Church, etc. He probably remembered that Saul's ideas were extremely broad in respect to the gospel – too broad, perhaps, for the brethren at Jerusalem to fully appreciate him when he was amongst them. But by this time all the brethren, and especially large-hearted Barnabas, had come to see the divine plan in a broader light – more nearly as Saul of Tarsus had comprehended it. Barnabas concluded that the conditions at Antioch were just such as would deeply interest Saul, and that the brethren there would be greatly profited by his assistance. He found him; he brought him to the Church at Antioch, where his influence was no doubt great for the good of all. We rejoice in noting the heart nobility

of Barnabas. Many Christian men of smaller caliber would have reasoned themselves into a different course, and a wrong one; saying, As it is, I am the chief one amongst the brethren here, having had larger opportunities than the others, and having had close contact with the apostles at Jerusalem; but if I bring Saul into our midst his superior abilities as a logician, as an expounder of the Scriptures, will cast me quite into the shade, etc. Brethren who reason thus are misguided by their own selfishness. They forget that the Lord's work is in his own hands, and with such a spirit they could neither please him nor be prospered in his service, and that the reactionary effect upon their own hearts would be a serious one. All of the Lord's people should be noble and unselfish; and the closer any of us approximate this character the more will we be loved of the Lord, the more will we be loved of the brethren, and the more useful will be our sphere of influence for righteousness, for truth, for the Lord.

DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS

It is noteworthy that our Lord never gave any name to his people; he called them disciples, which signifies pupils, learners. The apostles have applied to the Church various terms, "church of the living God;" "church of God;" "church of Christ;" "the church;" but gradually the name "Christians," identifying God's people with their Redeemer and leader, came to be the general name throughout the world. It is a pity that any have thought it necessary to adopt any other names than these, common to the entire church of Christ, or to use these names in a sectarian manner. Evidently the name Christian should represent one who trusts in Christ as the Messiah – one, therefore, who trusts in him also as the Redeemer, and who accepts all the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures, based, as they are, upon these two declarations – **(1)** that men were sinners, needing to be redeemed before they could be acceptable to God, and that they were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; **(2)** that they have accepted the name of their Redeemer, and are seeking to walk in his footsteps. There was a start toward sectarianism in the early Church, some saying, I am a Christian, but of the order of Paul; others, I am a Christian, but of the order of Apollos; others, I am a Christian, but of the order of Peter, etc. But the Apostle promptly rebuked this spirit, assuring them that the relationship in Christ was all that was necessary; that neither Peter nor Paul had redeemed them, and that neither, therefore, could occupy the place of a head to the Church. The Apostle, furthermore, calls our attention to the fact that such a spirit on their part was an evidence of that much of carnality still remaining; that much of a worldly partisan spirit contrary to the thought and teaching of the holy spirit. It is to be regretted that ever since the Reformation times this spirit has prevailed to a large extent, some taking the name of Luther, others of Wesley, others of Calvin, others non-personal, but, nevertheless, sectarian or party names, as Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, etc. We are not claiming that those who do these things are wholly carnal, without the Lord's spirit, but we do claim with the Apostle that a disposition to such a partisanship is contrary to the spirit of the Lord, and to that extent is carnal, fleshly, and should be overcome by all who would be recognized of the Lord as overcomers.

Let no one misunderstand us to advocate one sect or party as instead of many. On the contrary, we know that if there must be sects there is an advantage in having many, as they serve to keep each other within more reasonable bounds, serving to some extent to hinder gross arrogance and persecution. What we ought to have is one church, one household of faith, accepting the plain fundamentals of Scripture, and with limitations as to acceptance of more or less conjectural views outside of those fundamentals – all fraternizing, fellowshipping each other, and all known as Christians, and thus separated from all who deny the atonement, from all who deny the results of the atonement, in the resurrection,

and from all who deny the propriety of a newness of life in the present time. In this view of the matter each individual Christian would have an independence as respected his own thought, aside from fundamentals which are clearly stated in the Scriptures.

BENEVOLENCE A FEATURE OF PIETY

In view of the fact that the condition of the Antioch Church made Barnabas glad, and in view of the instruction and assistance rendered it by Paul and Barnabas, we are not surprised that it was a living Church, instead of a dead one, and we are not surprised that, an opportunity offering through a famine especially affecting the vicinity of Jerusalem, this congregation of believers at Antioch was prompt to make up a relief fund and send it to the Church at Jerusalem, as an expression of its love and sympathy and oneness of spirit. It is more blessed to give than to receive, not only as respects the sentiment of the matter, but the results are still more blessed. No doubt the contributions sent were a comfort and a help to the Jerusalem brethren, but the blessing to the givers we may be sure was far greater. The Lord would reward them, and that in proportion as they had given, at some sacrifice as respects earthly things, luxuries, etc.

"Is thy cruse of comfort failing?
Rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine
It shall serve thee and thy brother.
Love divine will fill thy storehouse,
All thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often
Make a royal feast for two."

We do not mean to say that this principle could be worked out now, under present conditions, with the nominal church full of "tares," and thoroughly soaked in false doctrines. What we do mean to say is that had it not been for the sectarian spirit which early crept into the Church after the death of the apostles, there would not have been the present number of tares, professed Christians, nor the same amount of false doctrine discounting the true. Ambition for numbers and for influence led to the formulation of doctrines which attracted the tares into the Church. Without these false ambitions, and with the fundamentals of the ransom and full restitution clearly recognized by all, the nominal Church today would be amazingly smaller than it is, but it would be comparatively pure, and it would be at one with itself, and there would be no desire for any other name than that of the one Lord and Head.

The question then may arise, In view of this what should we do? Should we join with those who are trying to form a federation of all the churches? We answer, No, for two reasons: First, because common sense tells us that such a union as is proposed is not along the principles which the Lord laid down, but is merely a human expedient. (Second) The Lord's Word shows us an illustration in the harvest time, and that it is not the time for organizing, etc., but a time for reaping, separating, threshing, winnowing, and gathering into the barn of the true wheat – the time also in which the tares will be bundled for the day of burning or great time of trouble with which this age shall close.

Our proper course is to separate ourselves from all the Babylonian systems and to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made free," and to own no other name than his, and to accept no other standards than those of his Word. Our duty, after coming ourselves into this position, is to help others into the same liberty, and to avoid putting restraints upon the brethren, or making tests of any kind, except such as are fundamental – faith in the ransom and full consecration to the Lord, which would include an honest desire to know the meaning of his Word. There can be no danger amongst such as are taking this position, and where only this class is recognized as the Church, and where this liberty wherewith Christ has made us free is strictly observed.

THE MISSIONARIES OF ANTIOCH – R. 5888

ACTS 11:19-26; 13:1-3

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." – Matthew 28:19 (R.V.)

ANTIOCH, at the time of our Study, was the third city in the world both in commercial importance and in population, only Rome and Alexandria taking precedence. It is noted as being the first city outside of Palestine in which a Christian Church assembly was formed. Indeed, we might say that as Jerusalem was the center of influence in Palestine, so Antioch became a center of influence as respected the Gospel amongst the Gentiles.

It seems that the little spark of Truth which started the work of the Lord at Antioch resulted from the persecution which arose at the time of St. Stephen's death. Some of those forced out of Jerusalem by the persecution settled at Antioch; and of course they could not walk in the light of the Gospel without letting the light shine out for others. At first this was done only toward those who were of the Jewish faith; and in a large commercial center such as Antioch there were sure to be large numbers of Jews. We know not how many of them were reached with the Gospel; but it was surely confined to them until the end of Israel's seventy symbolical weeks of Divine favor – until the autumn of 36 A.D.

At the same time that the Lord was sending Deacon Philip to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian eunuch, and the opening the door to the Gentiles through the Apostle Peter, He was ready to open the door to the Gentiles everywhere. Under the leadings of Divine providence some of the Christian Hebrews got the proper thought at the proper time – that a Gentile who would receive the Lord Jesus could be classed as a disciple equally with the Jews who had done so. The work thus started amongst the Gentiles at Antioch spread considerably, the Gentiles seeming to take more notice of the Gospel than had the Jews to whom it was first preached.

BARNABAS SENT TO ANTIOCH

The news that the Gospel had gone to the Gentiles at Antioch, and that large numbers were turning to the Lord, reached the Church at Jerusalem – the head-center of the Christian work, so to speak. The Apostles and all the brethren had been prepared by the Lord's manifest dealing in the case of Cornelius, the Roman centurion; and this undoubtedly would detract from their surprise and would largely correct any prejudice on the subject of the Gentiles as fellow-heirs of the Abrahamic Promise, which had previously pertained to the Jews alone. Nevertheless, we note that the record does not say that this news caused rejoicing in the Church at Jerusalem. We may infer, therefore, that they heard with considerable trepidation that large numbers of Gentiles were attaching themselves to the faith, and may have reasoned that this would have an injurious effect upon the Cause they loved to serve.

It would appear, then, that the original motive in sending Barnabas to Antioch was that he might see and judge of the true condition of things, and give a report as to whether the new converts were worthy to be recognized as fellow-heirs with the saints. When Barnabas had arrived in Antioch, he took note of "the grace of God" manifested amongst the believers there. This must have been manifested not only in their faith in Jesus as their Redeemer and Master, but also in their conduct as disciples of our Lord. Barnabas quickly discerned the cleansing and sanctifying power of the Truth amongst these believers, and thus realized that the Cause, instead of being hindered by such accessions, would be honored thereby. We read that he was glad; and we may assume, although it is not stated, that he promptly made report to the brethren at Jerusalem, and that they were

glad also.

The Apostles evidently made an excellent choice when they sent Barnabas to Antioch. The fact that he was a Levite by birth would make him very careful of every Jewish interest connected with the faith; and undoubtedly he was well learned in the Law. He was a native of Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea, not far from Antioch. Born thus at a distance from Jerusalem and amongst Gentiles, he was probably a broad-minded man, as well as familiar with the dialect spoken by the people of Antioch. Another good reason for sending him was the fact that he was a beautiful character and very helpful as a brother and a teacher in the Church. We remember that he sold a part of his property in the interest of the poor in Jerusalem; and that he received the name Barnabas – "a son of consolation," a helper – as a title of love and respect in the Church.

HIS WORK WITH THE YOUNG CHURCH

Barnabas at once overflowed toward the Antioch brethren, and in the same comforting and helpful manner as at Jerusalem he exhorted them all. Doubtless he saw various things needing to be corrected. But instead of finding fault, instead of lacerating their feelings and chiding them, he began by acknowledgment of what he saw in them as a cause for rejoicing. His comforting message was to the effect that they should cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart. He wished the dear brethren, new in the Truth, to see to it that their hearts were firmly united to the Lord, that their minds were fully made up, that their consecration was complete.

This was a matter of first importance. Later on he might show them kindly, gently, certain weaknesses of the flesh to which they were addicted. Or, their hearts being more firmly united to the Lord, they might very speedily see these inconsistencies of themselves, without a word being said. The point which we would impress is that it was not a restraining of the flesh, nor a perfecting of it, but a much deeper work of grace than this – a purity of heart, a heart-adhesion to the Lord.

We cannot do better today than to follow this same course in our endeavors to do good unto others as we have opportunity. The brethren need strengthening rather than tearing. They need building up in the most holy faith and in love. They need encouraging in heart adhesion to the Lord. Criticisms of the flesh may come in afterward, but very gradually and kindly.

There were three elements cooperating which made Barnabas so suitable a person for service, and which will surely make any of us an able minister of the Truth. These elements are stated in Verse 24: "He was a good man [moral, upright, reverential], full of the Holy Spirit [he had not received the grace of God in vain; in him it was a living power, the new mind guiding and controlling in all of his affairs] and of faith." However good a man may be, and however much of the Lord's Spirit he may have, a strong faith is essential. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Let us strive to have all of these qualifications in our ministry, that we may be true sons of consolation, helpful in the Lord's service and to His people wherever we may be. No wonder we read that as a result of the labors of Barnabas at Antioch much people was added to the Lord!

SAUL OF TARSUS BROUGHT TO ANTIOCH

The last we heard of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:30) was that after the opening of his eyes of understanding, after he had become a disciple of the Lord Jesus, he had preached first in Damascus and then in Jerusalem, after which, his life being endangered, the brethren had sent him down to Caesarea, and then probably by ship to his native city, Tarsus. We are not informed regarding the nature of his work in his home city, but can readily suppose that one of his character and disposition would not long remain idle. And if the sphere of outward activities was a narrow one, we may be sure

that his mind was active in the study of the Divine Plan, and that his great heart was also active, in comprehending Divine grace and in considering ways of service.

Evidently Barnabas had in mind the talents, the force, the logic, of Brother Saul, whom he had met in Jerusalem; and he concluded that, Tarsus being not very far from Antioch, he would look Saul up, interest him in the service of the Church at Antioch, etc. He probably remembered that Saul's ideas respecting the Gospel were extremely broad – too broad, perhaps, for the brethren at Jerusalem to appreciate fully when Saul was amongst them. But by this time all the brethren, and especially large-hearted Barnabas, had come to see the Divine Plan in a broader light – more nearly as Saul of Tarsus had comprehended it.

Barnabas had concluded that the conditions at Antioch were such as would deeply interest Saul, and that the brethren there would be greatly profited by his assistance. So he found Saul, and brought him to Antioch, where his influence was doubtless great. We rejoice in noting the heart nobility of Barnabas. Many Christian men of smaller caliber would have reasoned themselves into a wrong course, saying, "Having had larger opportunities than the others, and having had close contact with the Apostles at Jerusalem, I am the chief one amongst the brethren here. But if I bring Saul into our midst, his superior abilities as a logician, as an expounder of the Scriptures, will cast me quite into the shade."

Brethren who reason thus are misguided by their own selfishness. They forget that the Lord's work is in His own hands; that with such a spirit they could neither please Him nor be prospered in His service; and that the reactionary effect upon their own hearts would be serious. All of the Lord's people should be noble and unselfish. And the closer we approximate this character, the more shall we be loved of the Lord and of the brethren, and the greater will be our sphere of influence for righteousness, for the Truth, for the Lord.

DISCIPLES FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS

It is noteworthy that our Lord never gave a name to His people, but called them disciples – pupils, learners. The Apostles have applied to the Church various terms; such as, "Church of the living God," "Church of God," "Church of Christ," "the Church." But gradually the name Christians, identifying God's people with their Redeemer, came to be the general name everywhere.

It is a pity that any have thought it necessary to adopt any other names than these, which are common to the entire Church of Christ, or to use these names in a sectarian manner. Evidently the name Christian should represent one who trusts in Christ as the Messiah – one, therefore, who trusts in Him as the Redeemer and who accepts all the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures. These doctrines are based upon three declarations: **(1)** That all were sinners, needing to be redeemed before they could be acceptable to God. **(2)** That the believer accepts God's forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ. **(3)** That he has accepted the Leadership and name of Christ and henceforth will seek to walk in His steps.

There was a start toward sectarianism in the early Church, some saying, "I am a Christian, but of the order of Paul." Others said, "I am a Christian of the order of Apollos;" still others, "I am a Christian of the order of Peter." St. Paul promptly rebuked this spirit, assuring them that relationship in Christ was all that was necessary, that neither Peter nor Paul had redeemed them, and that neither Apostle could therefore occupy the place of a head to the Church. Furthermore, the Apostle calls attention to the fact that such a spirit on their part was an evidence that much carnality still remained, much of a worldly, partisan spirit, contrary to the teachings of the Holy Spirit. – 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-7.

It is to be regretted that ever since the Reformation this spirit has prevailed to a large extent, some taking the name of Luther,

others, Wesley, Calvin, others non-personal, sectarian or party names such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc. We are not claiming that those who do so are wholly carnal, without the Lord's Spirit; but with the Apostles we do claim that a disposition to such partisanship is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord, and to that extent is carnal, fleshly, and should be overcome by all who would be recognized of the Lord as overcomers.

What we ought to have is one Church, one Household of Faith, accepting the plain fundamentals of Scripture, and with limitations as to acceptance of more or less conjectural views outside of those fundamentals – all fellowshipping each other, and all known as Christians, and thus separated from all who deny the Atonement, from all who deny the results of the Atonement in the resurrection, and from all who deny the propriety of a newness of life in the present time. In this view of the matter, each individual Christian would have an independence as respects his own thought, aside from fundamentals which are clearly stated in the Scriptures.

MISSIONARIES SENT FORTH

For a considerable time Paul and Barnabas met with the Church at Antioch in the worship of the Lord and in the study of His Word. The result of these studies was that the Church as a whole was developed and brought to the point of considering and praying about means for the spread of the Gospel. There were a number of Prophets – public speakers – and teachers in the Church; and evidently they began to think of how they might be used to the glory of God and to the blessing of others, as they themselves had been blessed by the Truth.

This is always the case with those who receive the Truth into good and honest hearts. Properly enough, they desire to feed thereon themselves and to grow strong in the Lord. But just so surely as the Truth is received, it gives a strength and a desire to use that strength. This is as true today as it was then. The sanctification which the Truth brings starts with our begetting of the Spirit; and the energy for service corresponds with the quickening of the Spirit.

Evidently the Church at Antioch had an oversupply of teachers, as compared to its own requirements, and began to look about for larger fields of service. They were uncertain as to the course they should follow, and hence looked to the Lord as the real Head of the Church. They served and they fasted; and we may be sure that they prayed also. As a result they came to the conclusion to send forth two of their number – Barnabas and Paul – as representatives of the whole in mission work.

We are not informed in what manner the Lord directed them to this decision. It is possible that this was after the same manner that we today would consider a similar case, and would say, "After studying the Scriptures and praying, seeking thus to know the mind of the Lord, we believe that it would be His will that such ones of our number should go for a public service of the Truth. We believe that we are guided to this conclusion, not by any wrong spirit of pride or ambition, nor with any mercenary motive, but by the Holy Spirit. We believe that it is the Lord's will that we as a congregation should send forth these representatives to carry the light to others."

In some manner the conviction came strongly to the Church at Antioch that this was its duty and privilege. It is worthy of note that the Church sought out its very best representatives for this service, thus letting the spirit of self-sacrifice prevail. No doubt the Lord blessed the Church correspondingly, and made up to them the loss sustained in the giving of these two very talented brethren to the mission work.

ORDINATION AND LAYING ON OF HANDS

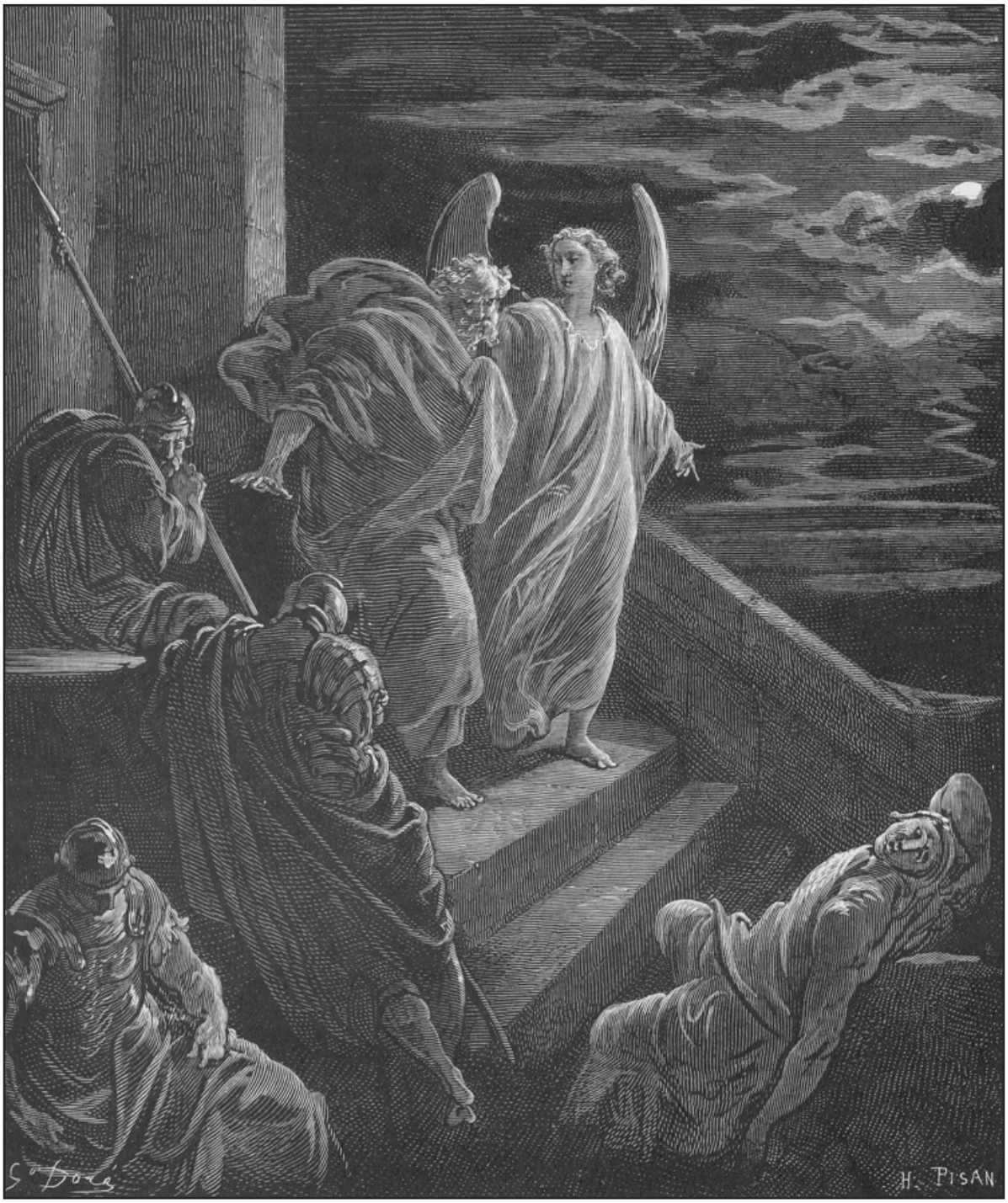
The proper course having been decided upon, the congregation fasted, prayed and laid their

hands upon Paul and Barnabas, and then sent the two on their missionary tour with God-speed. The laying on of hands would probably be done by the congregation through their representatives, the Elders. But this proceeding did not signify, as is generally understood today, an "Ordination"; for Paul and Barnabas had been recognized for a considerable time as amongst the principal prophets and teachers in the Church at Antioch. It would not signify authority to preach, as Ordination sometimes means today amongst Christians of various sects and parties.

This ceremony simply meant, "We, the congregation at Antioch, by this laying on of hands of our representative Elders, are sending forth these two men, Paul and Barnabas, on a missionary tour; and that they go, not only as representatives of the Lord and of themselves, but also as representatives of the Church of the Lord at Antioch; and that as such we hold ourselves responsible for their maintenance. We will supply them the needful assistance, and thus will be colaborers – sharing in their labors, sympathizing in their difficulties and trials, helping them in their necessities, and partaking with them also in whatever results shall come to the Lord's praise through their efforts."

Accordingly we find that after this missionary tour the two brethren returned to Antioch, and made report. It would appear that subsequently the Apostle Paul, at least, traveled without any such dependence upon the Church at Antioch – without any such praying and laying on of hands and without any subsequent reports of results of labors – though still in love and sympathy with them, so far as we may judge.

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.
Acts 11:21



St. Peter Delivered From Prison, by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

**Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and
a light shone in the prison, and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying,
"Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.
Acts 12:7**

CONTRASTING EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS – R. 3002

ACTS 12:1-9

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." – Psalm 34:7

HEROD, was a family name. There were several kings over Israel by this name; **(1)** Herod the Great, who flourished about the time of our Lord's birth, and who murdered the babes of Bethlehem. **(2)** Herod Archelaus, son and successor to Herod the Great – deposed A.D. 6. **(3)** Herod Antipas, another son of Herod the Great, the murderer of John the Baptist, who subsequently, with his men of war, set at naught and mocked Jesus, just prior to his crucifixion – deposed A.D. 40. **(4)** Herod Agrippa I., grandson of Herod the Great, mentioned in the present lesson as the murderer of the Apostle James. **(5)** Herod Agrippa II., the last of the Herods, before whom the Apostle Paul defended himself. – Acts 26:28.

The Herod of our lesson (Agrippa I.) was given his kingdom by Claudius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, whom he saved from a violent death. History says of him, "He curried favor with the Jews in every way: he hung in the Temple, as a votive offering, the gold chain which the Emperor Caligula had given him; he lived in Jerusalem, and punctiliously observed the traditions of the fathers, and secured the fervent loyalty of the Pharisees. At the Feast of Tabernacles, A.D. 41, he took the reader's stand, and read the whole Book of Deuteronomy aloud, bursting into tears, as if quite overcome, when he reached the words, 'Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother.' He feared that because he had Edomite blood in his veins he might incur the hatred his grandfather, Herod the Great, had borne, and took this way to gain the political favor of the Jews, who cried out, 'Do not weep, Agrippa; thou art our brother.'" Within a month after the events of this lesson he was a corpse. His tragic end at Caesarea, whither he had gone to a magnificent festival, in honor of Claudius Caesar, is thus summed up by Geike, from Josephus' account: –

"*A vast multitude assembled to see the festival and games, and before these the king, in all the pride of high state, appeared in robes inwrought with silver threads. The time chosen was daybreak, so that the kindling sun shining on his grand mantle lighted it into dazzling splendor. Presently some of his flatterers, always at hand beside a king, raised the cry, echoing a reminiscence of the days of Caligula, 'Deign to be gracious to us, thou divine one! Hitherto we have honored thee as a man; henceforth we own thee as more than mortal!' Instead of rebuking such lying servility he drank in this adulation with high pleasure. Next moment a great pain racked his bowels. Conscience-stricken at this blasphemous folly, the poor wretch felt that the wrath of God had struck him down, and the cry arose from him in his agony, 'See, your god must now give up life, and hasten into the arms of corruption!' In the Acts (12:23) we are told that he 'was eaten of worms.'*"

Knowing thus much about the man, Herod, enables us to understand why he made his attack upon the Church. Altho not a descendant of Jacob, but of Esau, he had espoused the religion prevalent in his kingdom, and was seeking favor with the Jews by his zeal for Judaism, – which meant, of course, his zeal and energy correspondingly against Christianity. As we have already seen, the Jews had begun a work of persecution against the Church, but were hindered by their own troubles with Caligula Caesar; but the latter was now dead, and the persecuting tendencies of misdirected fervor could again be exercised. The Lord, of course, was not subject to these conditions, and could have miraculously prevented the persecutions recorded. But, as the lesson shows, he permitted the evil to triumph in part and restrained it in part.

The Apostle James, whose death is here recorded, in few words, was a matter of fact one of the most noble and notable of the apostles. He was one of the three who usually accompanied our Lord in the most confidential capacity; – with his brother John, and Peter, he was with the Lord in the Mount of Transfiguration. In the same company he was present at the awakening of Jairus' daughter. In the same company he was one of the inner circle of the Lord's friends in the trying hour in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was he and his brother whom our Lord surnamed Boanerges – "sons of thunder" – probably because of their eloquence and forcefulness of speech. It was he and his brother whose mother entreated the Lord that they might sit "the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in the Kingdom," and who, when questioned by our Lord, declared their willingness to share in his work and suffering, even unto death. They were both faithful, James being amongst the earliest of the martyrs for the cause, and John living to a life of old age, – being probably the last survivor of the apostles. Altho the record of James' ministry is brief in the extreme, it contains nothing that gives the slightest suggestion of anything except zeal and faithfulness to the Lord and to his cause. This James, who died early in the Christian era, should not be confounded with the other James, the author of the Epistle of James – known as "James the Less," the son of Alpheus (Cleopas – Mark 3:18) – husband of Mary, supposed to have been second cousin to our Lord, and for this reason, according to Jewish custom, styled "the Lord's brother." – Gal. 1:19.

When Herod saw what satisfaction it gave his subjects, and especially their leaders, the Pharisees, that he should thus persecute the Christians, he proceeded to take Peter also. The implication is that James and Peter were two of the foremost amongst the apostles in the Church at this time. The expression, "When he had apprehended him," implies that some delay occurred between the order for his arrest and the time of his imprisonment. He was delivered to four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion consisted of four soldiers to guard a prisoner, two of them being chained to him, one on each side, by the wrists; the other two doing sentinel duty, one at the door of the cell and the other in an outer court. The four quaternions were in the nature of relief guards, so that each quaternion would have charge of the Apostle for six hours of the twenty-four.

It was at the season of Easter, or, more properly, the Passover – "the days of unleavened bread." The time of his arrest was too close to this religious festival to make it proper for such a public execution as Herod had determined upon. He would reserve his show of zeal for the Jews' religion until this festival was at an end. Meantime, the infant Church at Jerusalem was evidently sadly perplexed by the trend of affairs – at a loss to know how to interpret the Lord's providences. Doubtless they held their memorial of the Redeemer's death at this time, as we now do, and their hearts were sadly stricken with a realization of the fact that the Lord's faithful must all drink of his cup – of ignominy and death. Altho a considerable number of Jews had accepted Jesus, as we saw in a previous lesson, apparently the majority of the believers were scattered abroad, but few of them residing in Jerusalem. These few it seems met in little groups, in private houses, for prayer and praise, for study of the Lord's Word and for building one another up in the most holy faith; and such a meeting was in progress during this eventful Passover week. We are informed that the burden of their prayer was for Peter.

Well instructed by the apostles, we may be sure that they strove not to ask amiss; and that they copied the Master's petition, at least in so far as the expression, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." We have no record that the Church met in prayer for James, tho quite possibly it did; neither are we bound to suppose that if they had not met and prayed for Peter, Herod would have succeeded in

killing him also. It is sufficient for us that we remember that God has plans of his own, irrespective of the plans and prayers of his people, and that all of his good purposes will be accomplished; but it is well that we should note also his good pleasure that his people should come so fully into accord with him and his plans that they would neither be surprised nor disappointed in their fulfilment.

Probably James' death was accomplished suddenly, while, as we have seen, Peter was held over in bonds. This gave the Church time to consider how much she had already lost, and how much she might lose further were not the Lord to interpose for her protection. No doubt they reasoned that they had already sustained a great loss; and no doubt Peter's life and his service seemed much more precious to them since the loss of James. In any event, the Lord's people were getting a blessing through their experiences and through their prayers. Peter also was getting a valuable experience; and doubtless the Lord was overruling in the matter so that a great blessing and stimulus to the faith of all, would ensue through Peter's release.

Peter, his heart filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding, was enabled to sleep peacefully in the prison, notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions in which he was placed, and his expectancy that on the morrow he would be called before the king and publicly executed. What a blessing is this rest of heart, this ability to entrust to the Lord all of life's affairs! It is written, "He giveth his beloved sleep." (Psa. 127:2.) We cannot say that the Lord's people are never troubled with insomnia, sleeplessness, but we can say that many, previously troubled with the cares of this life, exciting to nervousness, have by the Lord's grace been enabled so to cast all their care upon him that it has in great measure controlled their nerves and brought back to them the ability to enjoy sweet refreshing rest in sleep. Nothing is more favorable to this peace of heart than a ***full consecration*** to the Lord – "all to his wisdom resigned:" it entitles to a ***full confidence*** in the divine promises, – through faith in the divine wisdom, love and power, which has guaranteed that all things shall work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Peter was aroused from his sleep, loosed from his chains, bidden to arise and fasten the girdle usually relaxed in slumber, to put on his sandals, – wrap himself in his outer cloak and follow the messenger, the light of whose glory filled the prison cell. The doors opened before them; they passed the sentinel unobserved, and Peter was led from the castle of Antonia into the city proper. There the heavenly messenger left him. There is a simplicity to this narrative which, even on the surface, commends it as truthful. Were it a fiction doubtless the author would have stated matters altogether differently. He would have represented the angel as doing homage to the apostle, or delivering to him some complimentary message from the Lord, or lifting him up or putting on his sandals and fastening them for him, or assisting in girding him or putting on his mantle. He would have had him give Peter certain directions at the time of leaving, etc. But this simple account merely represents the angel as doing for Peter what he could not do for himself, and no more, and leaving him without a word as soon as he had brought him properly into the city.

The record shows that Peter was so surprised with what had transpired that he for a time fancied himself in a dream, in a trance, – expecting that he would awaken shortly to realize himself still bound; but the cool morning air, between three and six o'clock, and being left alone, brought him to his senses and convinced him that he was actually at liberty. He knew well the usual meeting place, and thither he bent his steps. It was the home of Mary, mother of John Mark – cousin of Barnabas, (so "sister's son" should read in Col. 4:10.) John was his Hebrew name and Marcus his Latin name. It was this Mark who was the Evangelist, the author of the Book of Mark, – the same who accompanied Barnabas

and Paul on their first missionary journey.

Altho the hour was an unusual one, the inmates of the house were awake, the prayer-meeting was still going on at the very time when the Lord was answering the petition. Peter's knock on the outer door was responded to by the little maid-servant of the family, Rhoda (Rose), who, child-like, discerning the voice of Peter (for it was customary to make inquiries before opening the door) was so surprised and delighted that she neglected to open the door before running back to give word to the assembled disciples.

The fact that the praying ones were amazed, astonished, and could scarcely believe that it was Peter who had come, does not prove that they had not faith in their own prayers. Rather, we may say that their faith in prayer was well attested by their continuance in it all night, and to such an hour in the morning, and that they were not asleep at the time Peter knocked; but, knowing something regarding the prison and the appointment of four quaternions of soldiers, they would reasonably expect that whatever answer might come to their prayers would not be a [release of Peter under such circumstances, but might rather be some interference at the time of the trial, something to change the mind of the king, who would be the judge in this case, and thus to bring about Peter's release. But "God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," and not infrequently his ways are not as our ways, and sometimes we learn valuable lessons under just such circumstances. Doubtless the faith of some was shaken considerably by the death of the Apostle James; doubtless they queried concerning the lack of the manifestation of divine favor and interference for the protection of the Apostle and for his preservation as a helper in the Church. But if they were thus tempted and tried, and their faith sorely tested for a while, they had now, in Peter's experience, a valuable lesson on the other side – an illustration of God's power to intervene when he will and how he will on his people's behalf.

Here again, in this contrast between the experiences of James and those of Peter, we have something that would be entirely contrary to the manner or thought of a forger attempting to write such an account from his imagination. It would not occur to him to have so marked a manifestation of divine providential care in the case of Peter, and to leave James' case with apparently no evidences of divine protection. And this calls to our mind the fact that divine providence seems frequently to operate along these lines – contrasting between the experiences of different members of the body of Christ, and sometimes instituting contrasts in our own individual experiences as Christians. In some of life's events we can see the Lord's protecting and guiding care most markedly, while in others it would seem absolutely lacking. The lesson it should bring to us is one of full faith in the Lord, and of full submission to all his providences. Indeed, we are to note that in the majority of cases our experiences are far more like that of James than like this experience of Peter's. The miracles which we can trace in our own experience are certainly few and far between. Whatever we have had, or whatever the apostles or others have had in this direction, which serves to demonstrate to us God's supervision of his own affairs, is evidently intended to give us strength and courage, whereby we can walk fearlessly and courageously in the dark, for, as the Apostle says, under divine providence we generally are called upon to "walk by faith, not by sight." – 2 Cor. 5:7.

"IT IS HIS ANGEL!"

"Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them [unto those] who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:10.) Knowing the Apostle Peter to be one of the heirs of salvation, and never for a moment considering the possibility of his escape from prison, the brethren queried if their visitor might not be Peter's angel as his representative, come in answer to their prayers, to give them consolation. Soon, however, they realized that

it was Peter himself, and afterward learned of his miraculous deliverance by the angel.

Verse 17 implies that when the brethren realized that it was actually Peter who stood before them they were excited with joy, and would probably have created quite a commotion had not the Apostle beckoned to them with his hand that they should be quiet. Then calmly explaining to them his providential deliverance, and sending a message to James ("the Less") "the Lord's brother" or second cousin and to all the brethren, he at once left the place – left Jerusalem. When Peter and John were delivered from prison it was by the Lord's instruction that they went back to the Temple and continued to proclaim; but now, in the absence of any instruction from the Lord to the contrary, the Apostle wisely understood that his proper course, in co-operation with the Lord's providences, was that he should flee, that he should not put himself unnecessarily into danger, nor attempt to wage a warfare with the representative of the Roman government, trusting to further miraculous deliverances.

We know some who would have been inclined, in Peter's place, to have made a great hurrah about the escape, and to have boasted that prison-walls and Roman soldiers were powerless against the Lord; and who, perhaps, would have gone the length of daring the king to arrest them again. But we believe such a course would not have been the will of the Lord, and that Peter evidently took the proper course. This suggestion may be valuable to some of the Lord's people. This is the time in which "the prince of this world" is permitted to maintain his general control; and we are to expect miraculous deliverances to be the exception rather than the rule, and are to act accordingly; – so far as lieth in us, preserving the peace, living peaceably with all men. Peter's conduct in not daring the king was not a manifestation of lack of confidence in divine power, but it was in obedience to the Master's words, "When they shall persecute you in one city flee ye to another." The persecution had reached him personally; he had been delivered from it, and now was his time to flee to another place, where doubtless, the Lord had other work for him to do. Let us be prompt in following a similar course in proportion as our circumstances correspond. When the persecution gets too severe, cry to the Lord for help, and if he opens a door of deliverance flee to another place or condition, where, with equal boldness and courage and faith you will, as before, lift high the royal banner.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

It is comparatively easy for us to associate our Golden Text with Peter and his deliverance, and with ourselves in instances of peculiar assistance from the Lord in our affairs, temporal or spiritual; but it is much more difficult for us to associate it with the experiences of the Apostle James and with our own experiences, in which disasters, difficulties and fiery trials are permitted to come upon us. Such experiences are doubtless sent of the Lord for the development and testing of our faith. The Lord's providential care was none the less in the case of James, and we may be sure that nothing happened to him contrary to divine intention and permission; and so with ourselves; we may be sure, not only that the Lord knoweth them that are his, but sure also that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and that he "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape." In James' case the "escape" was final and decisive, in Peter's it was temporary.

Our trials and difficulties are not, therefore, to be esteemed as the results of divine carelessness in respect to our interests, but as the outworkings of divine providence for our good. Those who are able to view the matter from this standpoint are thus enabled to learn some of the very best and most helpful of life's lessons, and are thereby prepared for the glorious things coming; whereas those who

allow faith to falter in times of trial, and who will walk with the Lord and have confidence in him only when they are the recipients of miraculous favors, are correspondingly weak, and correspondingly unprepared for the Kingdom. And as these lessons are necessary to the individual, so they are necessary also to the Church as a whole, as in the case of James and the Church in our lesson. So far as James was concerned, it could matter little to him which way the Lord effected his "escape" if, in the Lord's wisdom, he had finished his course, perfected his character and stood the test. As for the Church, it could learn an important lesson; viz., that God, while pleased to use the Apostles and various agencies in the prosecution of his work, was not at all dependent upon them, but that one or all of them could be dropped out, and yet the Lord be thoroughly competent to manage his own work and to accomplish all the gracious promises of his Word.

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON – R. 2139

ACTS 12:5-17

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."
– Psalm 34:7

FOLLOWING the history of the early Church, we now come upon another period of persecution. The former persecution seems to have passed by the principal ones of the Church entirely. It manifested itself against ordinary believers rather than against the apostles and public ministers. The result, as we have seen, was the spread of the gospel by those who were "scattered abroad everywhere."* The persecution now considered was directed against the apostles. Both persecutions were from the adversary and his faithful, but were such only as God saw best to permit, and such as would work out some good in connection with his plan.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Caligula the Jews were kept in a considerable ferment by reason of his repeated attempt to have his statue set up in the temple, with altars for the worship of himself. While the Jews were so busy in defending their own religious liberties, the infant Christian Church was left comparatively unmolested; but now Caligula was dead, and a very different personage was his successor, and the Jews having a respite from troubles of their own, had good opportunity to cultivate their animosity against the followers of the Nazarene. King Herod Agrippa, having been obliged to cooperate with the Emperor's plans, had made himself more or less obnoxious to his subjects, the Jews; and he now sought to conciliate them, by persecuting the Christians. This Herod Agrippa was a worthy successor to his uncle, who had murdered John the Baptist, and to his grandfather, Herod the Great, who murdered the infants at Bethlehem. His first object was personal aggrandizement and the perpetuation of his own family in the kingdom. His public acts, on the one hand, were intended to continue him in favor with the Emperor at Rome, and on the other hand, to gain as much favor as possible from the people whom he ruled as king, – as representative of the Emperor.

The persecution began with the killing of the Apostle James. Seeing that thereby he gained the favor of the Jews, Herod thought it the cheapest method by which to regain popularity with his subjects and proceeded to take Peter also. What a sad blow this must have been to the early Church! James and Peter were apparently the principal leaders in the affairs of the Church at Jerusalem, as they

two with John, the brother of James, were the most prominent amongst the apostles while our Lord lived. We can imagine the consternation – James already dead, Peter seized and imprisoned and his execution held over merely because it was the week of Passover, and because according to Jewish custom no one could be put to death during that week. The manifest, if not declared, intention of Herod was that Peter should be killed in some manner immediately after the close of the Passover week. Here we pause to notice a strange commingling of religious formalism with the spirit of murder: the spirit of murder was in Herod and in the Jews, yet both for the time restrained themselves in order to symbolize by the Passover ceremonial a cleansing of the heart and life, a purification toward God. There is a lesson here (for all who will take it) to be on guard lest the outward and formal observances be an utter contradiction of the real condition of the heart. While obedience to the Lord in outward observances is eminently proper, it is still more important that the thoughts be pure and good.

By this time the number of Christians in Jerusalem was evidently considerable, notwithstanding the number that had emigrated on account of persecution; and it does not at all surprise us that we are informed that these everywhere were praying to God on Peter's behalf. There were evidently no church buildings in use by the Christians up to this time: they gathered in convenient places, and quite probably there were several of these in Jerusalem. The earnestness of these prayers is evidenced by the fact that they were kept up ***all night***, and evidently for the ***entire week*** of Peter's imprisonment; for he was not delivered until the very last night, and, when delivered, it was some time in the "fourth watch," which began at three o'clock in the morning, and he was knocking at the "gate" of Mary's home, where prayer was being made, before sunrise. – Verse 13.

We cannot know just why the Lord permitted the death of James and spared the life of Peter; yet, doubtless, both events exercised a beneficial influence upon the Church. Possibly, indeed, there may have been growing in the Church a lack of appreciation of these apostles whom the Lord had so highly honored as his mouthpieces and channels for blessing the Church. The martyrdom of one would cause his loss to be seriously realized, the imprisonment of the other would and did draw forth the sympathy, love and appreciation of the whole company; and after they had prayed so earnestly for his deliverance, we may be sure that Peter was more than ever beloved by the Lord's flock. At all events, the death of one and the sparing of the other, we may be sure, were parts of the all things that worked together for good to those who loved the Lord.

Meantime, Peter had been delivered to four quaternions of soldiers (i.e., four relief guards of four soldiers each): two of these watched in the outer courts of the prison, while two of them were chained to Peter in the cell. Thus, seemingly, every precaution had been taken against his escape. He had been delivered once before from the prison into which he had been thrust by the Sanhedrin, but now he was under military guard, probably in the Tower of Antonio, and chained to soldiers who knew that under Roman usage his escape would mean their death. The entire week had been spent in prayer on his behalf, yet the Lord had not delivered him, and each day seemed to add to the earnestness of the prayers, and to the necessity for the deliverance; yet knowing the circumstance it was difficult to judge in which way the Lord's providence would be interposed on Peter's behalf, if at all. Since the Lord had seen best to permit the death of James, they must have reasoned that they could not be at all certain that Peter would be delivered from death. How great and how far-reaching were the blessings of that week of trial and of prayer, of drawing near to the Lord and of realization of complete dependence upon him, we may surmise. The Lord was pleased in his providence to spare Peter to the Church, but he was also evidently pleased to be inquired of by the Church on this subject.

However, even on the last night of his imprisonment, though he expected that the next morning Herod would call for him to deliver him up to death, notwithstanding all this, "Peter slept." His noble, courageous heart was fixed upon the Lord, he trusted in divine wisdom and divine power and divine love, and was assured that nothing would be permitted to happen that would not be in some manner overruled for good. Hence, committing his all to the Lord, he was able to rest sweetly in sleep. Here was the appropriate order of things: the one directly involved so sweetly resting in the Lord's grace and love that he was free from trouble and fear, while the Church in general, though not so directly and personally concerned, were so full of loving interest on behalf of a brother that they prayed without ceasing day and night on his behalf. What they asked we are not told, but what they should ask under such circumstances we may well know from our Lord's own prayer (Matt. 26:39-42): whatever they asked, in propriety must have included the thought and the expression – Thy will, not ours, O Lord, be done.

When the angel awakened Peter, loosed his fetters, opened the strongly barred gates of the prison and brought him forth into the street, he left him, having accomplished his mission. Peter, amazed and bewildered, could scarcely realize at first whether it was a reality or a vision; but as he got his senses collected he comprehended that God had wrought for him another wonderful deliverance from the hands of his enemies – Herod and the Jews. But he neither went back to taunt the soldiers, nor was he filled with self-admiration and self-confidence, so as to shout his deliverance on the way; but considering the matter carefully he concluded that his proper course would be flight to some other city, as the Lord had directed, saying, "When they shall persecute you in one city flee to another." But as a true under-shepherd he had too deep an interest in the Lord's people who were so earnestly praying for him, to leave them without some explanation: so, going to the house of one of the friends of the cause, he communicated to them the fact of his release, sent word to the leaders of the cause in the city – "James, and the brethren" – and then fled to another place. This James was the brother of our Lord, while the James who had been killed was the Apostle, the brother of John. The fact that James and the prominent brethren were not at the house of Mary and her son John-Mark would seem to corroborate the thought that the meeting at the latter place was only one of many in Jerusalem.

The narrative of Peter's knocking at the door and the interruption of the prayer meeting, with the announcement of the answer of the prayers in a most remarkable manner, is all told with a beautiful simplicity, and indicates to us the loving spirit of fellowship and brotherhood which existed in the early Church.

The Golden Text carries a great lesson of its own in connection with Peter's deliverance. The Scriptures give us clearly to understand that the angels of God are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14.) Very seldom have they been manifested to any as in this recorded instance; yet they are present as the representatives of the Lord to do any needed work for us according to his will. But we are to understand that the angel of the Lord was with James who was killed, as truly as with Peter who was delivered; and that the deliverance of God's people is not always such as can be appreciated by the natural senses. Sometimes the angel of the Lord is present with us and grants sustaining strength to endure a trial from which we are not delivered. Such was our Lord's case: we read that an angel appeared unto him and strengthened him. Such was probably the ministration of angels to James in his time of sore distress, when his life was yielded up to a murderer. Such also have been the experiences of many: the angel of the Lord has stood with them and has strengthened where he was not authorized to deliver. It is recorded that many Christian martyrs were so upheld and blessed, that even in the midst

of persecution, torture and flames, they were able to sing praises to the Lord. It is related of Bishop Latimer that when bound to the stake he said to Bishop Ridley, speaking with great equanimity respecting his own suffering, "We shall light such a candle, by God's grace, in England this day, as I trust shall never be put out again."

How it enlarges the confidence of a Christian to realize that whilst earthly powers may be in opposition, and whilst he may be really of himself powerless to resist adversaries, and whilst in addition to the flesh and blood adversaries he may realize that he battles also with spiritual wickedness in exalted places – against Satan and his minions of darkness – yet that, on the other hand, "greater is he that is on our part than all that be against us," and that all the heavenly hosts are subject to the divine will and may be employed for the advancement of the divine cause according to divine wisdom.

DELIVERANCE IN ANSWER TO PRAYER – R. 4346

ACTS 12:1-19

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."
– Psalm 34:7

OUR lesson is supposed to date about twelve years after our Lord's crucifixion. A period of rest and prosperity was now followed by persecution. Herod Agrippa I. had been appointed King of Judea. He was grandson of Herod the Great, the murderer of the babes of Bethlehem. He was nephew of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist. It was his son, Agrippa II., before whom the famous address was made by St. Paul. (Acts 26:28.) He was not a Jew, but an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. He appears to have been desirous of the good will of the people, even at the cost of principle. He took pains to observe the minutia of Jewish ceremonials. He hung up in the temple the gold chain which the Emperor Caligula had given him. It is related that at a "Feast of Tabernacles" he caused the entire Book of Deuteronomy to be read in the hearing of the people, and that he "burst into theatrical tears" when the reader came to the words, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, who is not thy brother." Thereupon the populace obsequiously cried, "Don't weep, Agrippa, you are our brother."

PASSOVER SEASON SIFTING

On the lookout to curry favor with the Jews, especially the influential ones, Agrippa caused the Apostle James to be beheaded, and finding that this brought great pleasure to the Jews, he had the Apostle Peter arrested. The Greek word here rendered apprehend rather implies that his arrest was after searching. Probably all of the apostles were more or less secreted about that time, but, trusting to the sacredness of the Passover season, St. Peter ventured forth and was arrested and imprisoned, Agrippa intending his death directly at the close of the Passover week. Meantime, however, the Lord delivered him, as this lesson shows.

We can well imagine the sadness of the Church at that Passover season, which must have reminded them considerably of the time of our Lord's death and the alarm then amongst his followers. It may not be proven to the satisfaction of all, but to us for some years it has seemed as though each Passover season, each Memorial celebration, was a time of special trial and testing amongst the

Lord's followers. As Judas and Peter and all of the Lord's disciples got their sifting at this particular season of the year, so, it does seem to us, the sifting and shaking, by which Satan desires to have others of the Lord's followers, are specially permitted at the Memorial season. But whether this is a true supposition or not, it will surely not injure the Lord's people to be specially on guard against the wiles of the Adversary at these times – since we are to watch and pray always, lest we fall into temptation.

The thought of special trial, special temptation from the Adversary at this season of the year, seems to have been the foundation for the so-called "Lenten Season," or period of special restraint, fasting and prayer, which has come down to us through the oldest channels of Church history. The fact that the "lenten season" is with many today a mere formality does not mean that it is so to all, nor that it was so originally. Strongly would we recommend the fasting and prayer at all times enjoined in the Scriptures, and, if possible, that alertness be specially exercised by all of the consecrated during the forty days preceding the Memorial Supper.

As we have already explained, our self-denials are not merely along the lines of food and drink, but extend to all of our appetites. Nevertheless a very simple and very limited diet in the Spring of the year would undoubtedly be beneficial for the majority of mankind, even were there no spiritual blessings and prayers connected therewith. Winter cold bringing hearty appetites, the result toward Spring is apt to be a surfeited or over-charged condition of the system, from which it needs to be relieved by a measure of abstention, which is as favorable to spirituality as surfeiting is unfavorable.

THE CHURCH PRAYED FOR PETER

St. Peter is supposed to have been imprisoned in the famous Castle of Antonio, possibly in the very same room in which our Lord was arraigned before Pilate, and the same one to which Paul was subsequently taken when mobbed in Jerusalem. Peter had a guard of four quaternions (four soldiers each), who relieved each other every three hours. Two of the four were chained to Peter's arms, one to each arm, and a third was outside the door and a fourth in the passage leading to the outer iron gate. The power of Divine grace helping in every time of need and giving peace amid alarms, is well illustrated in this case by the fact that under all these circumstances St. Peter was fast asleep when the angel of the Lord came to deliver him. The proprieties of the case are also illustrated by the fact that Peter's friends, the Church, were not asleep, but praying for him. It was not for him to pray for himself deliverance from the power of Agrippa, for he had already consecrated his life unto death, and properly should feel quite ready to lay down his life at this time, if such proved to be the Lord's will in respect to him. For him to have asked for the prolongation of his life would have been to ask amiss, and would have manifested a wilfulness incompatible with a full consecration to the Lord's will. But with the Church it is different. They could with all propriety, while expressing to the Lord their confidence in the Divine supervision of the Church's affairs, tell him also of their love for St. Peter and of how much his sacrificing in the service of the Truth had done for them and was doing for them. They could properly enough express the hope that it might be the Lord's will that he should continue with them for their joy and comfort and upbuilding in the "most holy faith." It should not surprise us either that this prayer-meeting on St. Peter's account lasted all through the night and, for aught we know, other meetings of the same kind may have been held besides the one referred to in this lesson, which was at the home of Mary, the mother of Mark, the writer of the Book of Mark and the cousin of Barnabas, presumably the unnamed person of Mark 14:51.

It may be asked, Would it not have been appropriate for the Church to have offered

prayer and then to have retired as usual, leaving the results entirely with the Lord? We reply that the examples given us in the Scriptures fully warranted the all-night prayer-meeting and even its continuance for several days. Do we not know of our Lord's remaining all night in the mountain at prayer? Do we not remember his long and repeated prayers in Gethsemane? Do we not remember the Apostle's exhortation to the Church, "Praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks"? Giving this a liberal construction as signifying a prayerful attitude of mind and continued looking to the Lord for his grace and guidance, nevertheless our Lord's parable of the importunate widow and her repeated comings and her reward all teach the same lesson of importunity. Besides, our Lord thus applied the parable, saying, "Shall not God avenge his very elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." – Luke 18:7,8.

In one sense of the word the fears and sufferings of the Lord's people and their trials and difficulties ascend to the Lord in prayer and call to Divine Justice for vengeance, recompense, punishments, without any word from his people to this effect. Rather their petition should be in line with Stephen's prayer for his enemies, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Nevertheless, as Abel's blood is said to have cried to the Lord for vengeance, so the blood of his saints is said to cry unto him day and night, "How long, O Lord, dost thou not judge and avenge?" – Rev. 6:10.

The Lord certainly does not wish us to understand that he has no oversight, arrangement or plans of his own, nor that the Divine arm may be moved by our prayers in any direction at our pleasure, at any time. On the contrary, the Lord assures that all of his purposes shall be accomplished and that his Word shall not return to him void, "but shall prosper in the thing whereto it was sent." (Isa. 55:11.) Nothing can alter the definite, fixed outlines of the Divine program. But the Lord has evidently left certain of the filling in of our experiences subject to change or modification. These minor details he is ready to use for the blessing of his people, for the development of their faith. Thus in St. Peter's case the Lord was doubtless intending a deliverance in some manner, because he had a further work for him to do, but he allowed it to come about in such a manner as to indicate it as a reward of the faith of those who prayed for him. Otherwise the deliverance might have come sooner or later, and in response to faith or works along some other line.

The Lord evidently desires to cultivate in us a quality of faith, trust. Therefore he has made faith a condition for all of his blessings of the present age, and distinctly tells us that without faith it is impossible to please him, and that he desires us to "walk by faith and not by sight." – 2 Cor. 5:7.

WHY ONE TAKEN AND THE OTHER LEFT

The question materially and properly arises, Why was Herod permitted to kill the Apostle James and not permitted to kill the Apostle Peter? Was St. James unworthy of any further part in the Gospel work, or less worthy than the Apostle Peter? Was there not enough work for all, or was St. James permitted to die because he was ready for death, because he had finished his course? And was St. Peter preserved alive because he had not finished his course? None of these suggestions seems to be the correct one. Rather let us surmise that both apostles were loyal and acceptable to the Lord and at the ***mark*** of perfect Love, fit for the Kingdom. Let us suppose that the Lord preserved Peter because he had a special work for him to do, and that he allowed the beheading of St. James, not because there was nothing more that he could do, but because by such a death as he experienced and at such a time he could accomplish the most that was possible – a work which could not have been so well done at another time, nor by the death of another person. St. James, apparently, was the leader amongst the apostles and

his execution would be a great shock to the cause, awakening the followers of our Lord to renewed zeal and energy in the proclamation of the Truth. It doubtless served to increase the appreciation of the people for the apostles, causing them to give still more earnest heed to their teachings and to realize how greatly the cause of the Lord had been made dependent upon them, the "twelve apostles" of the Church. – Rev. 21:14.

This, then, would help to explain why the Church prayed day and night for St. Peter. The loss of St. James made St. Peter and every other Apostle doubly precious in the estimation of the "household of faith." God intended that St. Peter should live to be an old man, for this was our Lord's prophecy respecting him. But the emergency proved a blessing to the Church, by way of stirring up their pure minds to an appreciation of the Lord's cause in general and for St. Peter in particular. A similar lesson may be drawn today. As we see some ripe grains taken and other ripe grains left, it may mean that the Lord can use the death of the one the better and the life of the other the better, in his dealings with the Church.

A REAL ANGEL, A REAL DELIVERER

The time in which the holy angels were permitted to materialize still continued a power possessed by them, but, we believe, is not now permitted to be exercised. It was between three and six o'clock in the last watch, for Peter was not missed until sunrise (Vat.), when the guards were changed. St. Peter, sleeping peacefully, was awakened by the angel, whose features were radiant, because this was necessary in order that the Apostle might discern that his deliverer was a holy being. The Scriptures mention numerous appearances of angels as men without radiant appearances. Peter was bidden to rise up. Quickly and simultaneously the chains which bound him to the soldier by either hand were loosed. He was instructed to put on his wooden shoes, or sandals, and to put on his outer garment, or cloak, and to follow his leader. We read that he followed, realizing the facts as those of a dream. Thus he was led past the first and second wards, or doors until they came to the great gate of the city, which opened of its own accord, and then the angel left him.

It is worthy of notice that the miracles performed here were only such as were beyond Peter's natural power. Whatever he could do he was required to do, namely, putting on of his sandals and his cloak, and following the angel. He could have been transported. His own sandals or other sandals could have been fastened to his feet. A new coat might have been provided. But the lesson is a more profitable one as it was given. Similarly in the Lord's dealings with us today, we should remember that it is ours to do everything within our power, and the Lord's to overrule all things for our good, and to supply our deficiencies from his abundance. Thus still he gives us day by day our daily bread, in the rain and the sunshine and the seed; but he expects us to labor for it, to plow the ground, to sow the seed, to harrow it, to thrash it, grind it and bake it.

"When Peter was come to himself," when he realized the facts in the case, that he was free, he said, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and...of the Jews." St. Peter's faith was strengthened. Willing to die, he found that the Lord was willing that he should live and labor and endure, and he was equally pleased, rejoicing, we may be sure, for the privilege of further service, even though it would mean further sacrifices and sufferings for the Lord's sake and for the sake of his people.

Doubtless the angel started Peter in the direction of Mary's home, where the prayer was being made on his behalf. The description of the house with an outer gate implies that it was one of the better class. Peter's knock was heard by little Rose, for such is the meaning of Rhoda. So overjoyed was she that,

forgetful to let him in, she ran first to tell the praying household that Peter was at the gate. Expecting no deliverance at such an hour, some thought the maiden mistaken, and then insisted that it must be his angel – in harmony with the prevalent thought that an angel had supervision of each individual of God's people and that such might personate the one under his protection.

The brethren were surprised at the Lord's answer to their petitions, because it came so unexpectedly as respects time. There was an outburst of excitement and questions, which the Apostle was obliged to silence by the shaking of his hands. Then he narrated the wonderful story of his deliverance and bade them tell it to the other James, the brother (cousin) of Jesus, and the other disciples. Then Peter went his way, whether to another city or to another house, we do not know. In any event, he exercised wisdom in not needlessly provoking Herod. There was consternation with the coming of daylight. Later on in the same chapter we learn of another visit of the angel of the Lord – this second time to smite Herod with disease (intestinal worms), from which he subsequently died. This chapter then shows us the power of Satan, the power of God, and the power of prayer.

THE GOLDEN TEXT

Of course, our Golden Text is a symbolical statement illustrative of the Divine guardianship of all those who are truly his. The thought is the continual supervision of our affairs by the Lord. Whether we think of the angel of the Lord as one of the heavenly host specially appointed on our behalf, or whether we think of him from the standpoint of the various powers of nature, the levers of which are all in the Divine care, it matters not. We have the assurance that the Father himself loves us and that all the heavenly powers are pledged to those whom he has accepted in Christ Jesus, and these unitedly guarantee blessings to all those who abide in God's love. This means to abide in faith in the Redeemer. It means to abide loyal to our consecration, to do the Father's will to the extent of our ability. That will is declared to be that we shall love the Lord supremely, our neighbor as ourselves, and all the members of the household of faith, as Christ loved us.

Paul and Baranabas at Antioch of Pisidia

Acts 13:14-16

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.
15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."
16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY TOUR – R. 2140
ACTS 13:1-13

WITH this lesson we leave the parent Church at Jerusalem, and the later Church at Antioch, and start with the Apostle Paul upon what is termed the first missionary tour. Really, however, nearly all of the work thus far done might be said to be of the nature of missionary work. Our Lord's work amongst the Jews was in the nature of a missionary work. The work which began with the day of Pentecost amongst the Jews was in the nature of missionary work. The work done by those who were scattered abroad as the result of persecution in Judea was in the nature of missionary work. The Church at Antioch was itself a mission Church. And so the missionary journey of the Apostle Paul should not be considered in the light of ***special*** mission work, as that term is used today (not a mission to savages and barbarians), but rather as a part of the whole work, which the Lord was pleased to specially bless and use in the establishment of the truth in various quarters distant from Jerusalem.

In a previous lesson we saw the progress made by the Christians at Antioch under the instruction of the holy Spirit through Barnabas and Paul. And this is corroborated by the testimony of this lesson that the Church at Antioch was in a healthful condition, spiritual and full of zeal for the spread of the gospel. It had in it by this time several persons of ability and full consecration whom the Lord was pleased to use in connection with its ministry; and the time had come when Paul and Barnabas could be spared to go elsewhere, to start others in the good way; and the holy spirit indicated that this should be done. How this was indicated we are not informed, and we will not speculate concerning it. Suffice it that the Church understood the directions of the holy spirit and obeyed them, Barnabas and Paul being agreeable also. Barnabas is mentioned first in the record because up to this time he had the more prominent position, as being older than Paul in spiritual things and perhaps also older in years. While Paul was "a chosen vessel" unto the Lord, prepared for a great service, it had not yet been fully manifest that he was the Lord's choice to fill the place of Judas, the ***twelfth apostle***.

Apparently Barnabas and Paul were sent forth at the expense or charges of the Church at Antioch, and hence went forth as their representatives, as well as representatives of the Lord. The importance of the matter was appreciated, and the dependence of the mission upon divine blessing was recognized in the fasting and prayer and outward manifestation of appointment by laying on of hands. This laying on of hands was not by way of giving ***authority*** to preach, for Barnabas and Paul had already been teaching in various quarters for some years, and had been teaching the Church at Antioch for over a year: it was therefore merely a ceremony by which the missionaries and the Church undertaking their support took cognizance of each other as representatives and represented in this special work about to be begun. But while accepting the commission of the Antioch Church, as its representatives, the missionaries specially recognized that they were sent forth by the holy spirit. – Verse 4.

They had not gone far before they began the work which lay so near to their hearts; – the preaching of God's message, of good tidings of great joy, of reconciliation effected by the precious blood of Christ. They did not go to heathen people, but went to sow the seed of the Kingdom in already prepared soil: they went, first of all, as in every place, to the Jews who for sixteen hundred years had been under the law as a school-master to prepare them to receive Christ. The pious Gentiles who were "feeling after God, if haply they might find him," and who had some knowledge of the God of Israel, frequently attended these Jewish synagogues, and hence in going to these the missionaries,

Barnabas and Paul, were reaching the best prepared and most religious element in every place.

The liberality of the management of the Jewish synagogues is attested by the fact that the gospel got a ready hearing in all of them up to the point where they realized that the message was likely to produce a division in their midst. If the Jewish synagogues and Christian churches today were conducted on a similarly liberal basis, and gave opportunity for the presentation of any subject that could be presented from the Scriptures and in harmony with the Scriptures, the present missionary work of disseminating the present harvest truth would be very much simplified. While today we are less subject to the violent persecution, on the other hand we are seriously handicapped by prevailing conditions and sectarian bondage.

John-Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, is here introduced to us; not as a third laborer in the special work of ministry of the truth, but as an assistant or servant to Barnabas and Paul. In this as in every place the Scriptures, while teaching that all believers are "brethren" and "fellow-heirs," nevertheless repudiate entirely the thought entertained by some to-day that all brethren are exactly on an equality in every matter. Very properly Mark did not say – "If I cannot go on an equality with Barnabas and Paul, I will not go at all." Very properly he did say that if there is any opportunity for service, if by any means I can render any assistance in the journey and affairs of these whom the holy spirit has indicated as special representatives, I shall be most glad to serve them, and thus serve indirectly the Lord and his cause. And there were opportunities, as there are always opportunities for those who have a will to serve the cause; and no doubt Barnabas, and especially Paul, received many helps from their younger brother who had become their servant chiefly from his desire to serve the cause of Christ. No doubt also their opportunities for public ministry of the truth were enlarged and broadened by his helpful assistance in secular affairs. Paul especially constantly needed a helper, because of his thorn in the flesh, his weak eyes.

Mark's faithful service continued for some time, but for some reason (verse 13) not stated he left the work, and we may judge very nearly lost his privilege and opportunity in connection with it. No one knows how much he may have lost of spiritual blessing and privilege by his failure to continue with Paul. The disagreement, whatever it may have been, apparently extended to his uncle Barnabas, and eventually led to the separation of the latter from Paul. However, years afterward John-Mark apparently saw things in a different light, and again joined Paul's company. He seems to have ultimately become a true yoke-fellow, very highly appreciated by the great Apostle. (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11.) Here is a suggestion to all of us that, no matter what may be the door of opportunity for engaging in the Lord's service, faithfulness to it is essential to progress; and there is a further lesson that if we find that we have erred and been unappreciative of our privilege the best thing to do is to repent therefor and seek a renewal of the opportunities, and to attest our loyalty by fresh and increased earnestness.

The gospel heralds continued on their journey through the Island of Cyprus, until at Paphos they came in contact with a new experience. There Satan has a special servant, a spirit-medium, a sorcerer, and false teacher. This man had ingratiated himself with the chief government official of that place, and when the latter was being reached by the gospel message the sorcerer opposed it, realizing that there can be no harmony between light and darkness, between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of demons, and that if the deputy governor became a follower of Christ and imbued with his spirit, he would be proportionately out of harmony with spirit mediumship and sorcery and all the evil works of the flesh and the devil. It was a peculiar

case, such as apparently had not previously been presented; it was a contention between truth and error and the servant of truth and the servant of error. It was just such a case as was needed to bring forward the Apostle Paul's grand traits of character: opposition only made him the stronger by arousing him fully to the necessity of the case. More than this, although he had already been made the recipient of certain "gifts" of the holy spirit, he was now specially imbued with divine power, as is here indicated by the Greek text; and acting under the direction of this holy power which possessed him, he pronounced against Elymas the scathing rebuke and sentence of blindness, recorded in this lesson.

The deputy, who was evidently honest-hearted and sincere in his desire to know the truth, was thus convinced of the truth, and embraced the gospel. From this time onward Paul takes his place as the chief one in the work: hereafter it is Paul and Barnabas or Paul and his company. It is quite probable that it was a failure to recognize the Lord's leading in connection with the Apostle Paul and his leadership as an ***apostle*** of this branch of the work, and through family sympathy with his uncle Barnabas, that John-Mark here deserted the work.

The spiritual lesson here, for us all, is **(1)** that the Lord himself is at the helm and directing his work, and that each and all of us should continually look to him for the guidance of his work and to note how he is leading the various members in the body (1 Cor. 12:25-31); **(2)** the lesson teaches us the Lord's will respecting the promulgation of the gospel; for altho unfortunately the Golden Text chosen is spurious – not found in old manuscripts (Mark 16:9 to end, being omitted by all old manuscripts – See also Revised Version), – nevertheless, the same thought, that it is the will of God that the gospel should be preached everywhere, is abundantly taught in other places (Matt. 28:19) and enforced by this very lesson under consideration. We see from it, too, that while certain servants are chosen and indicated by the Lord for certain special services, yet others are permitted to serve as did Mark, and still others may serve the Church at home, as did Simeon and Lucius and Manaen, and that still others – the entire Church – are privileged to cooperate in the matter of sympathy, love, prayers, hospitality and financial sustenance. – Rom. 12:6-13.

Circumstances have since greatly changed, and we are not to be confined to exactly the same methods of procedure now as then; but the inherent principles are the same. We neither wear the same kind of clothing, nor travel in the same kind of vessels, nor are we supported in exactly the same manner. But with all of these variances the same service is now due to be performed; namely, the preaching of the gospel to all who have "ears to hear." With the gospel presented on the printed page, and with present mail and rail facilities, a very much larger number may become public missionaries, going from place to place, holding up the lamp of life, carrying the good tidings from door to door. The same agencies make it possible for those who must remain at home and who can use the mails to thus go about doing good, preaching Christ and his Kingdom and its righteousness. Others in turn can go about preaching orally as well as circulating the printed page – "every man according to his several ability." (Matt. 25:15.) We who are living today have special opportunities and privileges for ministering the truth to others. Our responsibility is correspondingly large, and our faith and love and zeal should be correspondingly shown; for he who loves much and who has many opportunities will surely do much for him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

UNWORTHY OF EVERLASTING LIFE – R. 4364

ACTS 13:13-52

"The Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." – Acts 13:49

ALTHOUGH the missionary journey was only beginning, this lesson starts with the statement of what "Paul and his company did," whereas previously the narrative was respecting Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas was still the "Son of Consolation," still loved and approved of the Lord, but Paul was his "chosen vessel to bear his name to the Gentiles," and the special power of God upon him and through him promptly manifested itself. If, thereby, any spirit of jealousy awakened in the bosom of Barnabas, it was a great mistake. We trust that there was not – that he still realized that his special talent for Divine service was in being a "Son of Consolation" – now privileged to help, to encourage, to comfort St. Paul. To so do would be to properly recognize the Lord's oversight of his own work, and to rejoice to have his will done. Similar testings come to all of the Lord's brethren to this day – testings of humility, of brotherly love, of full submission to the Lord – of faith in his guidance of his own work. These testings are specially severe upon brethren of prominence in the Church. Hence the Apostle's exhortation, "Be not many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that the man (who is a teacher – in any failure) shall receive the greater condemnation." (Jas. 3:1.) Nor can we complain against the providence which thus tests us; rather we must concede the propriety of it; that those being selected for the glorious privileges of the future must fully demonstrate to the Lord humility and absolute loyalty to his will, even in our secret thoughts. Let us each apply the lesson, remembering the Apostle's words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12.) And again, "Humble yourselves, therefore, brethren, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." – 1 Pet. 5:6.

The same verse briefly states that John Mark departed from the missionaries, returning to his home at Jerusalem. What led him to this course is not stated. Faintness of heart, lack of faith, lack of courage – some arrows of the Adversary evidently smote him. This is evidenced by the fact that St. Paul was unwilling to accept him as a companion on a future missionary tour. Evidently he learned a valuable lesson, however, since we find that eventually he was restored to the Apostle's favor, as indicated by Col. 4:10 and 2 Tim. 4:11. While rejoicing in this recovery it is well that we resolve that such a course will not be ours, but that, as our Lord suggests, after having put our hands to the plow we will not look back, but press forward to the goal.

Another lesson is that those who are unfaithful under such conditions should not be received back again, just as though they had been faithful. Doubtless it was to Mark's everlasting advantage that St. Paul rebuked him and declined his further companionship for work until he had shown evidences of more developed character. The lesson of reconciliation is valuable, too. We should remember Gladstone's remark that "No man ever became great or good, except through many and great mistakes"; also Wayland's remark, "I saw a man last week who has not made a mistake for four thousand years. He is a mummy in the Egyptian Department of the British Museum. The only people who make no mistakes are dead people."

A NOTABLE SERMON BY A NOTABLE MAN

The next prominent stop of the missionaries was at Antioch of Pisidia, a great city, though not such a metropolis as the Antioch of our last lesson. (There were in all sixteen Antiochs.)

The first Sabbath day found Paul and Barnabas in a Jewish synagogue, according to their custom; because the Jews who had been

waiting for the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies were the best prepared soil for the Gospel message; at least so far as their heads were concerned. Entering with the others they took seats and, after prayers, listened to the reading of a portion of the Law, a selection from the prophets by the Elder of the congregation, styled the "angel of the synagogue." Then came the time for addresses by the rabbis or other learned persons. The officiating Rabbi recognized Paul and Barnabas as intelligent and cultured men and sent them word that they would be pleased to have them use the liberty of the synagogue, and give the people an address, if they felt so disposed. Then Paul stood up in his place, not going to the public stand. Saluting with his hand, St. Paul began his address, saying that he had something that should be heard by all Israelites and by others who reverenced God. He proceeded in a wonderful discourse, which in some particulars reminds us of Stephen's address – which St. Paul had doubtless heard and rejected. His argument was: –

(1) That God, having a great blessing to bestow upon mankind, had chosen the nation of Israel as a channel for the blessing; and that his care for that nation, ordering its affairs for centuries, was in line with this original purpose.

(2) He showed that, by and by, in that nation of Israel God had further indicated the choice of a special family through which the blessing should come. Messiah was to be the offspring of David. And "the sure mercies of David," to be accomplished in Messiah, would mean God's sure mercies to Israel as a nation, because Messiah would come to them as their King.

(3) Finally, after centuries of waiting, Messiah did come in this very line of descent – of the house of Israel – of the family of David – Jesus of Nazareth. – V. 23.

(4) The Messiahship of Jesus had already been recognized to a considerable extent. – Vs. 24-26.

(5) The Jewish nation as a whole, however, represented by their rulers, heedless of the testimony of the prophets, and ignoring Jesus' manifest purity, had accomplished his death through the Romans. – Vs. 27-29.

(6) The Messiahship of Jesus was proven by his resurrection from the dead. This accorded with the prophecies of the Scriptures and was attested by numerous witnesses. (Vs. 30-37.) Note the absence of cant and rant in this discourse. Note the appeal to reason, the logic of the argument – fact upon fact, each in its proper place and order. However, the mere recitation of these facts might have accomplished little. The Apostle proceeded to draw from the facts a great lesson, most important to his hearers, namely, that

(7) All were sinners, and that Jesus, the Messiah, through his death, had become the Saviour of sinners. Whatever his future work, he was already doing work for all those who would hear the message and give hearty response.

Here is still the test of the right preaching of the Gospel. It must recognize sin and not claim, as Evolutionists do, that "If man fell at all he fell upward"; that instead of being condemned of God as a sinner, man is being approved of God for his evoluting endeavors and successes. The Gospel of Christ recognizes Original Sin and the fall from God's likeness, the need of a Ransom sacrifice, the fact that Christ is our Redeemer and that "by his stripes we are [to be] healed"; that through his death our reconciliation was made possible; and that reconciliation means the covering of the sins of the believer from God's sight now, his privilege of entering the School of Christ and being prepared for heavenly glory. The Apostle briefly showed how justification from sin and alienation from God has thus been made possible – a justification far greater and more thorough than that which the Jews had enjoyed for centuries under their Law

Covenant; for theirs was only for a year and the "Law made nothing perfect," while the blood of Jesus, applied on behalf of believers, is effective for all of the various kinds and degrees of sin traceable, directly or indirectly, to the original sin of Adam, under which condemnation passed upon all.

THE WARNINGS OF THE GOSPEL

Notice carefully that the Apostle did not say to his hearers that a rejection of his message would condemn them to eternal torment. Not a word of that. But he did quote them an Old Testament Scripture which said, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and ***perish***; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." – Acts 13:41.

Nor does the Apostle say that his quotation declares absolute hopelessness for the despisers when they perish. The prophecy merely states that God's Plan would be declared and that all who despised it would nevertheless wonder at it and would perish without availing themselves of the blessings of salvation. God knows, not we, how many of these despisers who wonder, while perishing, have sinned against a sufficiency of light to hinder them from ever having any further opportunity during the Millennium. The Apostle does assure us that "Satan, the god of this world, hath blinded the minds of them which believe not," and the Scriptures assure us that the time is nearing when Satan shall be "bound" and deceive the people no more. (2 Cor. 4:4.) The same Apostle assures us that when the New Covenant shall be sealed and its beneficent arrangement inaugurated, God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth." – 1 Tim. 2:4.

In the older manuscripts the 42nd verse reads differently and indicates that the Apostles, after having delivered their address, did not stop (as was the usual custom) in the synagogues to hear and answer questions. Having delivered their message they preferred that it should take effect upon the hearts and that the discussion sure to follow might thus be delayed for a time. The people present, both Jews and proselytes, exhorted the Apostles that they might hear more of these things. One version implies that they desired this further information during the week; another, that they would expect it on the following Sabbath. In the synagogue there were quite a number who were devout, and, of course, a still larger number who were merely formalistic in their worship. The devout ones, as usual, were interested in the Truth. They followed the missionaries, who exhorted them "to continue in the grace of God," to realize that they had already been recipients of God's grace through the Law and the prophets and that they should go on and attain to the full fruition of their hopes, through the Lord's continued guidance, indicating that our Lord's advent and work were but a further part in the grace of God, in which they had already become sharers, and that to reject this would be to reject all the favors hitherto bestowed upon them.

ENVY, EVIL-SPEAKING, CONTENTION, BLASPHEMY

The next Sabbath there was a great concourse to hear the Apostles. Whether they spoke inside the synagogue or from its steps to people gathered in a broad plaza, we are not told. However, they had not proceeded far in their discourse until there were interruptions, contradictions, anger and blasphemy from some of the prominent Jews. Envy was at the bottom of all this. ***Their*** preaching had never drawn such crowds, and besides, the message given by these Apostles claimed to be something better than Judaism offered, something better than the Law and its sacrifices and feasts and fasts. Behold, how the Truth is a searcher of the heart! How it draws some and repels others! What a foe to Truth is the spirit of ambition, of jealousy, of envy! How it leads the natural man to anger, malice, hatred, strife, envy! And how the interests of the New Creature are endangered

from this same quarter! How pertinent St. Paul's exhortation that all who name the name of Christ shall put off anger, malice and strife and works of the devil and be clothed with meekness, patience, love, if we would fight the good fight and gain the great prize!

The effect upon the missionaries was to embolden them. They had spoken most gently, avoiding everything to arouse prejudice and opposition; but now, when, in spite of all, the opposition arose and threatened the efficacy of the Truth, they must be bold. They must state plainly the facts. They must show the envious, evil-speakers just where they stood. The people in general, dominated by these leaders, needed also to be shown the line of Truth. Now the Apostle declared, "We have done our duty in giving you Jews the first opportunity to hear of this grace of God, but seeing that you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, we turn to the Gentiles."

JUDGE YOURSELVES UNWORTHY

What a force there is in these words! God has so arranged matters during this Gospel Age that his Word of Truth and grace judges, tests, the honesty, the sincerity of those who profess to be his. It was not that the Apostle was judging their hearts and saying, You are not worthy of this message. The rejection of the message showed that the hearer was unworthy at heart. Each one who thus decided added to the count or list of those not worthy of eternal life under present conditions, under the present offer to faith and obedience. How many of them will have any further opportunity, and whether or not the further opportunity would avail them anything, is not for us to say. They are in the Lord's hands. Whatever he shall do for them will be entirely satisfactory to all who have the mind of Christ. We are sure of the

"Love Divine, all love excelling," and that it will give every member of Adam's race a full, impartial trial for life eternal, as a result of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Similarly today some who hear the message reject it with anger and malice and hatred and strife. They little realize that they are passing judgment upon themselves and proving by their prejudicial course and lack of harmony with righteousness that they are not worthy of life everlasting. And alas! some who had tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come and been made partakers of the holy Spirit and been fellowshiped as disciples and fellow-heirs of the same Body – some of these, Judas-like, at times have withdrawn themselves in similar anger, hatred, malice, strife, bitterness, blasphemy, evil-speaking. Alas! we fear that their case is hopeless as respects a future trial.

We shall be glad for anything that God may have for them, but we are reminded of the words, "***It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance***," if they fall away from the Truth, after once having seen and enjoyed it. It is notable, too, that such, as a rule, lose all fear of Second Death. Their eyes of understanding on this, as well as on other features of the Plan, grow dim. Our sorrow for them would be unspeakably deep, were it not that we realize that "The Lord will judge his people" and that we are in the day of which he has foretold us – when the sifting and shaking and purging of his people is due to take place. When we realize that "he doeth all things well," and makes no mistakes, it convinces us that we might have greatly erred in the past respecting heart condition, or that changes of character can be ***speedily*** effected under the bite, the poison, the sting, of pride, envy, slander, etc.

Then the missionaries quoted from the prophecies the Lord's Word, to the effect that the light which was to first shine to Israel was also to be to the Gentiles, and that the salvation which was first offered to the covenanted people was yet to extend to the uttermost parts of the earth. How consoling! How satisfying! We are reminded that but very few realize the length and breadth of this great salvation through the only name; that it is yet to extend

to every creature, even though it requires the Millennial Kingdom to bring this widespread knowledge and glorious opportunity.

When the Gentiles heard this they were glad and honored the Word of the Lord. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This does not signify ordained of God to have eternal life, but literally so many of them as were of the class and character which God proposed should have eternal life – these believed. There is a good thought here which applies as a general principle, namely, under the Divine arrangement, the Truth and the believing of it, are so related that only those of a certain cast of mind can believe, under present conditions. This includes the thought that they must have a certain harmony with God and righteousness, and that they must submit their minds to the Lord, that they may be taught of him through the channels he may be pleased to use.

The result of these efforts was a widespread recognition of the Truth – of the message of God – "The Word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region."

-poem not included

PAUL'S MESSAGE TO THE JEWS – R. 2149

ACTS 13:26-39

"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." – Acts 13:38

PAUL and his company did not stop at Perga, where they landed, but proceeded about one hundred miles inland to Antioch, probably because the inhabitants of the latter place were of a more intelligent class. The Apostle was not looking for the most degraded people, but for the most intelligent, and particularly those who were Jews or who had come in contact with the Jewish religion. This was a different Antioch from the place in Syria of the same name, whence they commenced their journey. As was their custom, they immediately sought prepared soil in which to sow the gospel seed: they went, therefore, to the Jewish synagogue. According to the Jewish custom a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures was read in the hearing of the audience, and the chief men of the congregation, discerning the intelligence of their visitors, asked them to make some remarks. It has been presumed by some that, as Paul's discourse seems to make reference to Deut. 1:31 and Isa. 55:3, these Scriptures had probably been portions of the reading lesson in the synagogue, and that the Apostle took the daily lesson as the text for his discourse.

The Apostle Paul was the spokesman, and without going forward to the rostrum, he spoke from his place in the synagogue, addressing first those who were Israelites by birth, and secondly, such Gentiles as had become proselytes to the Jewish religion, and who, therefore, met with them in worship, – "Men of Israel and ye that fear God." Beginning with the history of God's dealing with Israel, the Apostle reviewed that history down to the time of Christ; thus, wisely, giving his auditors assurance of his full sympathy with the Jewish hopes and the divine promises, quickening in their hearts the desire for the long promised Messiah and reviving their hopes in the great promises to be fulfilled through him.

Having thus gained the attention and interest of his hearers, he was ready to preach unto them the crucified Messiah, and (verse 26) he now intimated that the message which he bore to them was one of special favor.

They were aware that the most pious Jews resided in Jerusalem and Palestine, and that they themselves were reckoned as being to some extent alienated from God and from the promises, because they had preferred a residence among the Gentiles, rather than in the land of promise. It was appropriate, therefore, for two reasons, that the Apostles should explain why his message came to them rather than to the more zealous Jews of Palestine. He explained **(1)** that their fellow Jews, including the leaders of the nation, at Jerusalem had proved themselves unworthy of the gospel by rejecting and crucifying Messiah; and **(2)** that this very crucifixion, so far from overthrowing the divine arrangement, had merely been another step in the program foretold by the Lord by the mouth of his holy prophets. He pointed out that the crucifiers of Messiah had merely "fulfilled all that was written of him." Supposing a question in their minds – How could it be that the chief priests and chief religionists of our race could make so great a mistake, and so fail to rightly interpret the prophets? – the Apostle answers the objection, telling them that it was "because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day [and which] they have fulfilled in condemning him."

But this is not all – "God raised him from the dead," and of this we also have witness; and this message of the death and resurrection of Messiah constitutes the "glad tidings" of the fulfilment of God's promises made to father Abraham. This Jesus is the "seed" of Abraham, through the merit of whose death and by virtue of whose resurrection the promise to Abraham shall be fulfilled, – that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" with a full opportunity of eternal life.

With his usual logic the Apostle anticipated objections in the minds of his hearers, – Could Messiah die? etc., and he proceeds to prove to them from the words of the prophets that thus it was written beforehand. Although Messiah had long existed as the archangel, nevertheless the prophet David, speaking for God, said concerning him, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten [literally ***borne*** or ***delivered***] thee." The Apostle would have his hearers note that this birth mentioned referred to our Lord's resurrection, as it is written, he was the "first born from the dead," "the first born among many brethren." If Messiah was to be thus ***born from the dead***, it implied that he must first die, and hence the Apostle gives this as a prophetic prediction fulfilled in our Lord's experiences.

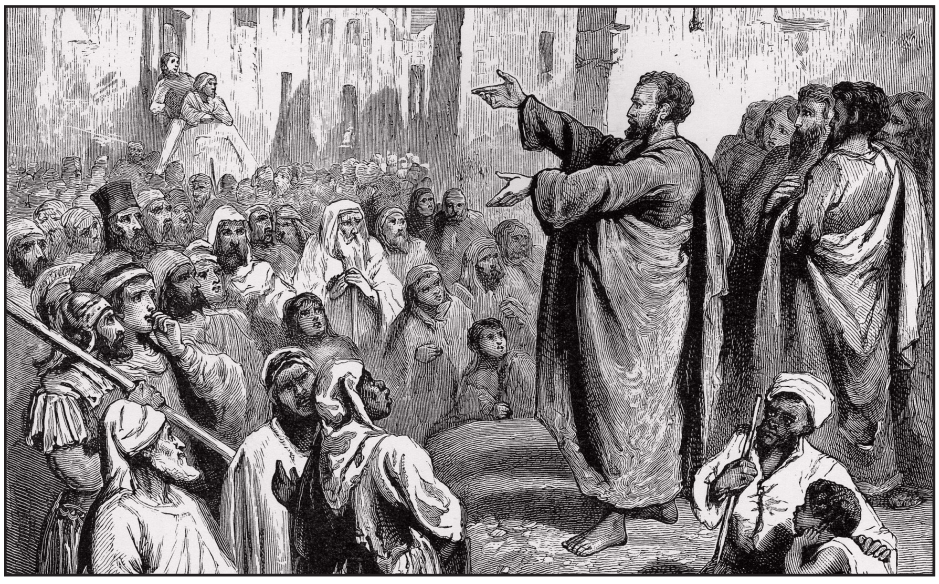
He quotes again the words of Jehovah through the prophet, addressed to Messiah, – "I will give you the sure mercies of David," – i.e., I will make sure to thee forever the mercies of David. The Apostle quotes this to prove that, altho Messiah as Michael the archangel had been great even before David's time, yet it would be at a later date, and as a result of some work which he would perform, that the mercies promised to David and his seed would be ***made sure*** to Messiah. This transaction was the giving of "his life a ransom for all," and the making sure to him of the Davidic promises by the Almighty was evidenced "in that he raised him from the dead."

In harmony with this is another statement by the prophet David, which evidently referred to Messiah and not to David himself, since it was not true of David. It reads, "Thou shalt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption." By this reference the Apostle would prove to them further, that God has specially promised the resurrection of Messiah, and that thus was indicated his death and temporary subjection almost to corruption. This could not apply to David who did see corruption to the full; but it was true of Christ who "saw no corruption," tho brought down almost within its grasp.

Then comes our Golden Text, which is the center and pith of the Apostle's discourse. He was not merely talking to tickle their ears respecting their being the seed of Abraham, nor was he talking for the purpose of showing his comprehensive grasp of Israel's history;

nor was he merely telling them the story of our Lord's crucifixion. More than all this, it was an individual message to every heart before him in condition to receive it, – namely, "Through ***this man*** is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." The Apostle does not refer to something that was done by our Lord as the archangel before "he was made flesh" (John 1:14), nor does he refer to any work to be done by him in his new, highly exalted condition, "set down with his Father in his throne" and partaker of his divine nature; but he here refers to the work done by "the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5,6) at Calvary. Thus the Apostle again emphasizes the fact that "as by ***a man*** came death, by ***a man*** also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Cor. 15:21.) Yes, this is the center of the gospel proclamation that the failure of the first perfect man was fully offset by the sacrifice of "***the man*** Christ Jesus," and that it was to this end that it was needful for our Lord to leave the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, to become poor (in the sense of taking our lower nature – but not its blemishes, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners"); and yielding up this human nature a ***ransom-price*** or corresponding price for the life forfeited by father Adam for himself and his race. This is the basis upon which every offer of grace is presented by the Scriptures. And now, he who was the Father's agent in the redemptive work is to be the Father's agent also in the work of "blessing" all the redeemed with ample opportunities for return to divine favor – the first step of which is the forgiveness of sins.

Whoever realizes the divine perfection and himself a sinner, imperfect and under condemnation of Justice, and desires reconciliation with God – and the result thereof, eternal life – such, and such only, are prepared to receive the gospel of redemption and forgiveness and help. "By him all that believe [after the manner described] are justified from all things [reckoned right, just, pure and perfect, notwithstanding all their inherent blemishes and uncontrollable weaknesses]." From none of these things could the law of Moses justify any. The law of Moses condemned every failure, but was powerless to forgive, and had no means of making permanent atonement or covering for those who were under that covenant, because its mediator, Moses, did not and (being himself a member of the fallen race) could not fulfil that covenant and satisfy its demands in his own person, for himself and the people. Hence, Moses and his covenant had not power to grant mercy or justification, as can be done under the New Covenant by its mediator, Christ Jesus, who sealed it with his own precious blood, "a ransom for all."



Paul preached the only genuine gospel – the only one authorized – the everlasting gospel which ultimately must be preached to every creature.

THE GOSPEL OF FORGIVENESS OF SINS – R. 3009

ACTS 13:43-52

"Through this man [Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." – Acts 13:38

PAUL AND HIS COMPANY, passing through the Island of Cyprus to the city of Paphos, at its southern end, did not tarry there. Its climate is miasmatic, and this is presumed to have been the reason for a hasty departure for the high lands of Asia Minor – Galatia, etc. The Apostle is presumed to have referred to his own semi-invalid condition at this time when later, in writing the Epistle to the Galatians, he said, "Through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel to you at first." (Gal. 4:13,14.) Galatia was the name of a district or state in which were located a number of cities and churches mentioned in the account of Paul's missionary tours – Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch on the borders of Galatia, in the state of Pisidia. The Antioch of this lesson should not be confounded with the larger city, Antioch of Syria.

In our last lesson we noticed Mark as the companion and servant of the two missionaries, but he discontinued his service at Paphos and returned to Jerusalem; hardships or discouragements or home-sickness, we know not what, evidently, for the time quenched his zeal as a servant of the Lord and of the truth, – assuredly much to Mark's disadvantage. Whatever the cause, evidently the Apostle Paul considered it quite insufficient; so that on another occasion, when Barnabas suggested Mark's accompanying them similarly, the Apostle declined – which he evidently would not have done had Mark's desertion been fully justified by considerations of health or necessity. It was a labor of love, however; no salaries were attached, and if Mark chose to discontinue his sacrifice it was his own business, and he was the loser.

So it is today, the Lord leaves his people free from restraints; free from threats; free from compulsion; to the intent that they may present their bodies living sacrifices day by day. Now, as then, whoever grows cold may discontinue his sacrificing, but himself will be the loser. We want to keep distinctly before our minds that while God condemns sin, and while his people have no liberty in this respect, but are obligated to do their best to withstand sin, it is different in the matter of sacrifice. The Lord is calling for free-will offerings, and whatever is not given with a hearty good-will, yea, with an earnest desire, with zeal, may as well be kept; – but the rewards promised to those who imitate the spirit of the Master and his devotion will be lost also.

There is an element of encouragement, however, in Mark's experience. Later on he evidently became quite a thorough and devoted soldier of the cross, was again accepted to the Lord's service, and we find that the Apostle Paul made acknowledgment of appreciation of his faithfulness. (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11.) Mark's recovery of lost ground and his reinstatement by the Lord in his service should be an encouragement for any who similarly have grown cold and lax as respects their devotion and sacrifice, and who have been consequently dropped out of active service of the truth. The Lord is very merciful to us in our weaknesses and imperfections, and as he restored Mark, undoubtedly he is willing also to restore all who will similarly learn a lesson from their failures, and who earnestly desire and strive for re-instatement and the privileges of service.

The first stop made in Asia Minor was at Antioch of Pisidia. The usual custom was followed, of going first to the Jews – to their synagogue. The missionaries were recognized as strangers and also as men of talent, and after the regular services of the synagogue had been introduced by the reading of the usual lesson from the Law, they were invited to address the assembled people – Jews by birth, and Jewish proselytes from the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul was the speaker, and made a

telling address. He recognized the fact that his hearers had faith in God's promises regarding the coming Kingdom: he did not need, therefore, to emphasize the Kingdom feature in this discourse. Rather, his hearers needed to see that there could be no Kingdom and no permanent blessing of all the families of the earth, such as was implied in the promises made to Abraham, unless in some manner divine forgiveness of the world's sins could first be secured.

The trend of his discourse, therefore, was to show how God had established a (typical) kingdom in the past, which had never reached the grand stage essential to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises, and that the thing necessary and lacking was a ***redemption*** of the world and the forgiveness of sins. Then he presented to their attention Jesus as the Messiah, – not merely a crucified Messiah, but also a risen one who, because of his death for the sins of the world, was able to save unto the uttermost all that should come unto God through him. Having put the matter squarely before them, the Apostle, in the words of our Golden Text, offered his hearers forgiveness of sins as the very essence of the Gospel.

Forgiveness of sin is still the essence of the Gospel, altho mankind now, as then, are generally loth to accept it thus, – it disappoints them by condemning them, and showing up the fact that all are sinners; – that there is none righteous, no, not one; – that all need just such a redemption as God has provided in the sacrifice of Christ. It disappoints also in that it shows a necessity for repudiation of sin in the heart, and, so far as possible, resisting it in all the conduct of life. Few are prepared for this – few have an ear to hear this message. The majority are ready to say, Preach unto us smooth things! Praise us for our religious fervor! Point out to us how much superior we are, not only to the heathen world, but to the masses of those who are about us! Tell us that we are God's people, and that he could not get along without us! Do not tell us that we are sinners, and under condemnation as others; and that all who would come unto God through Jesus Christ must come by the same strait and narrow gate of faith, and repudiation of sin, and heart-consecration!

The discourse had its effect, – a two-fold effect. The honest hearted, realizing the truth regarding God's perfection and their own imperfection, realized their need of just such a Savior as the Apostle had preached: these were specially drawn to the missionaries, who, recognizing their right attitude of heart, assured them that they were already in God's grace or favor; and that now the message of salvation through Jesus was an additional unfolding and development of the same favor that had already been extended to the Jews; and that they should continue in the grace of God, – continue to let God lead and guide them in his way, – continue to be the recipients of his mercies and blessings, which now were multiplied to them through Christ Jesus, and the atonement work he had accomplished. Others were much less prepared for the Apostle's words, and rather inclined to be envious of the attention bestowed upon the missionaries and their teachings, – which meant corresponding disregard for the usual leaders of the meeting and for the doctrines previously set forth, which the new views were calculated to supersede entirely.

So we find it today also: the essence of the Gospel preaching of today, as eighteen centuries ago, must be man's sinful and condemned condition, and his need of redemption, reconciliation and recovery from sin and its wages, death. This is the Gospel, which is falling into disuse in the pulpits of churchianity, in response to the itching ears of the majority, the "tares," and their call for the preaching of smooth things.

Additionally, it is proper now to emphasize the Gospel of the Kingdom, which the Lord and the apostles made so prominent; and to show that the little flock, the elect of this age, are to constitute the Kingdom – which, in the coming age, is to rule and bless the world,

by restraining Satan and every evil device, and causing the knowledge of the Lord to abound. Now, as then, the larger unfolding of the truth, the divine plan of salvation, is interesting to some – to the honest-hearted; and repulsive to some – the vain-glorious, the sectarian, the proud, the self-satisfied. Now, as then, when we are appealed to by those who have an ear to hear present truth, they should be encouraged to "***continue*** in the grace of God." They should not be told that their ignorance of present truth implies that they have none of the grace of God, but that because they have received of his grace into good and honest hearts it is the will of God that they should continue therein and grow and increase and abound; – that to this intent he is sending forth present truth to his people in every quarter, that the true wheat may be ripened and gathered to his garner.

News of the new religion – supplemental to the Jewish – spread throughout the little city in which Judaism had evidently gained a good foothold and great respect; – so that the whole city gathered on the next Sabbath to hear the message of the missionaries – probably the majority coming merely out of curiosity, to see the difference between the doctrines of these and of the regular Jewish teachers. "The whole city" may be understood hyperbolically, as signifying a large concourse; or that all classes and conditions of citizens were well represented. The gathering of such a multitude could not be held, probably, in the synagogue, but we may presume, in the yard or court surrounding it, or both. Such attention to two strangers and their new doctrine, which threatened an overthrow of Judaism, naturally awakened a spirit of jealousy in those whose interest was much in forms and ceremonies, honor amongst men and denominational pride, and, as a result, they contradicted Paul's statements with blasphemy. Not that they blasphemed God's name, but that they slandered or blasphemed the Apostle and Barnabas – speaking evil of them; we may surmise, misrepresenting their motives, their characters, etc. This is the usual course of those who fight against the truth, and it is so today. The truth cannot be gainsaid; it is irresistible; but it can be misrepresented; it can be denied; the presentations of it can be distorted, and its messengers can be slandered, vilified. The Adversary seems to adopt this method on every occasion. It is the method now in vogue. Those who oppose present truth will not dare to meet it openly in public discussion before the people, but they will distort and misrepresent it, and say all manner of evil against its advocates and will persecute those who favor it.

The missionaries were not discouraged by the opposition, but were rather made the more courageous, and brought to the point where they explained to their vilifiers, plainly, the true state of the case: that they were rejecting God's favor, God's plan, against themselves – to their own injury, to their own loss. They pointed out that God, in his mercy, had long favored Israel, and that in sending the message of Messiah to them first he was still favoring them; but that according to his direction it was their duty to proceed, and to tell the Gospel to whoever had ears to hear – to the Jew first, but also to the Gentiles. They pointed out that the lamp of truth which God had now lighted was not to be to the Jews exclusively, as had been his previous favors, but, as the Prophet had already declared, was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" – salvation unto the ends of the earth. – (Luke 2:32; Isa. 42:6; 52:10.)

This feature of the Gospel specially aroused the opposition of such Jews as were in the wrong condition of heart, but was proportionately attractive to the few who were in the right attitude. So it is today: the message which is now due to Christendom is – More Light! It shows that the lamp of God's Word of promise, which at the beginning of this age was permitted to bless both Jews and Gentiles in proportion as the eyes of their understanding were opened to see it, is shortly now to give place to a greater light; that whereas the Word of God has been a lamp to the feet and a lantern to the footsteps

of his faithful for over eighteen centuries, God's purpose now, shortly, is that this lamp shall become unnecessary, because "the Sun of Righteousness shall rise," and the whole world shall be flooded with the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God. – Mal. 4:2.

Those of God's people who are in the right attitude of heart will be gladdened by this expansion and unfolding of the truth: no feelings of jealousy will be theirs. But the majority, full of sectarian theories and plans and selfish sentiments, and blinded largely by false theology and by misrepresentations of the Word of God are violently opposed to any thought of God's general goodness being extended to ***every creature***, – not only those who have not yet gone to the prison-house of death, but also to the fifty thousand millions who have already gone down into the silence of death, in ignorance of the only name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved. But all the faithful, all the honest-hearted, will ultimately rejoice at the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of God's plan, to be consummated during the Millennium by the glorified Christ, Head and body.

Many of the Gentiles were glad as they heard of God's favor being broader than they had previously supposed – some, we may infer, were merely pleased that something had been shown up that was broader than the Jewish teachings, but some others, we are assured, believed in the true sense of the word – accepting Christ as their Redeemer and as their Law-giver. And so today also we see two classes among those who favor the present truth: some who hail it with joy and gratefully worship and serve the Lord more fervently than ever; and some who are merely glad to find that there is no Scriptural ground for the popular theory of an eternal torment for the vast majority of mankind; but are not specially drawn or constrained by divine love and mercy.

The more the truth spread the more angry became its opponents, the Jewish leaders; and what they could not oppose with argument or logic they did oppose successfully with prejudice and superstition, arousing these baser sentiments by misrepresentation. They secured thus the co-operation of some of the most honorable and notable people of the city, to such an extent that the missionaries were obliged to depart from them. The Adversary's methods are the same today in this respect also, that by misrepresentation he secures for his agents, often unwillingly, some who are noble and honorable people. This teaches us two lessons: First, to be careful ourselves – to be on guard against the Adversary's methods, if we are honorable and well-intentioned; to see to it that we are not inveigled into opposing the truth while supposing that we are doing God service. It teaches us also to have respect for those who are our opponents, and who give evidence of sincerity, even in their persecution. Some of the best friends of present truth today were once its bitter enemies, revilers and persecutors. We are hoping for many more recruits for the truth from this class of people. Their opposition is the result of misapprehension of the facts; they are blinded by the Adversary. Some may not get proper sight of the matter until the Kingdom binds Satan and opens their eyes; but others we may hope are the King's own and will be helped in time for them to make their calling and election sure in the Kingdom "little flock."

AS MANY AS WERE ORDAINED TO ETERNAL LIFE, BELIEVED

The word "ordained," here, may properly be translated ***disposed***; and thus we get the thought that as many of those who heard the gospel and its offer of everlasting life, and were disposed to accept the terms, became believers – obedient to the faith. So it is still. The truth, wherever it goes, finds some who like it and some who dislike it; some who appreciate the doctrines and rewards which it presents, and some who prefer the pleasures of sin or the affairs and rewards of the world.

It is the time for each one who has heard to take his choice. Soon the number of the elect will be complete, and then the work of the elect will begin – the blessing of mankind.

We assume that the expression, "shook off the dust of their feet" is a figurative one, as we would use it today, meaning that we took our departure. Our departure, under such circumstances, would be a witness against those who rejected our message and those who persecuted us – a witness which they would remember in coming time. Yet the departure of the missionaries was not in anger, for we are assured that they were filled with joy and with the holy spirit – rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and to have their names cast out as evil; – rejoicing also that they had, by the Lord's grace, accomplished something in the service. The expression, however, included more than merely the missionaries: it included those who remained as well as those who went. All were rejoicing. The truth and its spirit are constant causes for joy of heart to those who have them. On the contrary, the persecuting spirit, the jealous spirit, is always the unhappy one. Let us see that our rejoicing is of the same kind – in the Lord, in the truth, in the service, notwithstanding persecutions, trials and difficulties.

Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles

44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.
45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. And contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.
46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first, but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' "
48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.
49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

Acts 13:44-49

Acts Chapter 14

St. Paul Healing the Cripple at Lystra by Karel Dujardin, 1663

8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.
9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,
10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.
11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"
12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

Acts 14:8-12

Note: *Zeus* and *Hermes* are the Greek names for the same gods that the Romans called *Jupiter* and *Mercury.*

THROUGH MUCH TRIBULATION ENTER THE KINGDOM – R. 4368

ACTS 14:1-28

"All the gods of the nations are idols; but the Lord made the heavens." – Psalm 96:5

NOTWITHSTANDING the success which attended the message at Antioch in Pisidia, the spirit of the Adversary was aroused in the Jews, who stirred up devout and honorable women (Greek proselytes to the Jewish religion). They worked upon their prejudices, slandering the apostles and their work and their motives. These women in turn exercised influence with the chief men of the city, until finally the missionaries were expelled. Their next stop was at Iconium, about seventy-five miles southeast. Here again they first preached in the synagogue to the Jews, and a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks (Jewish proselytes), believed. But again the unbelieving Jews worked upon the Gentile population by calumnies. Hence the apostles remained there a "long time," probably several months, because there were many converts needing instruction and because it was an excellent field of labor every way. Finally, however, the chief Jews of the synagogue and the Gentiles whom they influenced, formed a plot for the stoning of the missionaries and alleged blasphemers. Learning of this the apostles followed our Lord's injunction of Matt. 10:23, to flee from persecution. Their next stop was at Lystra, twenty miles further to the southeast.

How human nature repeats itself! As it was God's covenanted people – yea, and the chief of the synagogue who opposed the Gospel and maltreated its servants who sought merely to do them good – so all through the age the professed servants of God have been the persecutors of their brethren! And so it is today! The slanders, the misrepresentations, come not from the politicians and the worldly, but from the Lord's professed followers, some of them of large influence. It is still true that there are "perils amongst false brethren" and a Judas spirit is to be expected now, as well as then. How shall we receive these things? If they discourage us or turn us aside in fear, it would prove that we are not worthy of the Kingdom privileges and honors, which are to be granted only to those who come off, by the Lord's grace, "more than conquerors"; to those who willingly, gladly, take the spoiling of their goods, their good names, earthly reputation, etc., rather than prove disloyal to the Lord and his brethren. Nor must we render railing for railing, nor slander for slander. We must take maltreatment patiently.

NO SYNAGOGUE – BUT A MIRACLE

Lystra was the capital of what was called Wolfland. Its people were less civilized than in other places visited. Evidently there were few or no Jews there and no synagogue. The preaching to the people was in the forum.

While St. Paul was preaching he perceived amongst his auditors a man lame from birth, giving close attention and, perceiving that he had faith to cooperate with healing, he commanded him, "Stand upright on thy feet." The miracle astonished the people, who, in their amazement, began to speak to each other, no longer in the Greek language, but in the Laconian, which the missionaries did not understand, saying that these were gods in human form. The apostles evidently retired to their own dwelling apartments after the miracle and were astonished when, a little time afterward, the people came together to offer sacrifices to them, calling Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury. The people had certain traditions about the gods coming down to earth as men and these doubtless led up to their remarkable treatment of the missionaries.

One of these tales was to the effect that Jupiter and Mercury once visited this very city of Laconia. The people took them to be

vagrants and refused to entertain them, and ridiculed and maltreated them. At last two peasants received them into their hut with hospitality, giving them their best. In return the gods transformed their hut into a glorious temple, over which they were set as the chief ministers of earth, while their neighbors were overwhelmed in a flood. The statue of Jupiter stood before Lystra's gate, and it was supposed that this story was repeated annually in the hearing of the people. Thinking of Paul and Barnabas as later manifestations of these same gods, they determined that now was their opportunity to show them reverence and hospitality.

Now came a temptation to the missionaries – such temptations as in one form or another are apt to come to all who engage actively in Christian work. Would they receive the homage of the people and then, as gods, seek to instruct them respecting Christ as the true Son of God come from heaven, who had died for the world's redemption, etc., or would they stop the procedure forthwith? Such temptations are very forceful with many: "Let us do evil that good may follow." Similar temptations of the present time might be suggested. A minister might sail under false colors, under denominational name, which misrepresented his heart and which he misrepresented. He might seek thus to do God service and to advance the Truth, but would it be wise? Would it please God to have us thus do evil that good might follow? We think not. The Truth may be presented as kindly, sympathetically, harmoniously as possible, but it can never fight a good fight under a cloak of hypocrisy.

The same principle applies to others; the business man may put his light under a bushel for the sake of trade and with the promise to himself that he will use money gained in forwarding the Truth. But would such a course be acceptable to the Lord? We believe not. Some affect ignorance of the Truth or disdain for it, that they may retain social position, and persuade themselves that there are more than compensating advantages favorable to the Lord, the brethren and the Truth, in the course which they pursue. We believe that they prove themselves unworthy of a position in the "little flock" of overcomers. The principle is of broad application, and it is the principle each of the Lord's people should see, and fix clearly in his judgment, that he may guide himself accordingly.

HONESTY REWARDED WITH STONES

The missionaries ran in amongst the people, dissuading them from sacrifice and assuring them that they were ordinary men like themselves. They informed them that their very mission was to turn them from such works of ignorance and superstition and to indicate to them the true God, his true character, and his proper worship. They said to them, "We bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." Wisdom from on high guided them to know that it would be useless to quote the Old Testament Scriptures to these people, who had no knowledge of them. They discoursed, therefore, what the people could understand and appreciate, and thus they set a grand example to all who should ever speak as messengers of the Lord. Much of the preaching is far over the heads of the hearers.

They introduced to their attention the God who made the heaven, earth, sea and all the contents of these. They explained that although this great God was interested in his creatures always, yet hitherto he had permitted all the nations to walk in their own ways untaught, unrestrained. Nevertheless he did give them certain evidences of his constant care, in the sunshine and the rain, with the fruitage of earth and its seasons, thus providing mankind with food and occasion for gladness and appreciation of life.

Only a scrap of the discourse is given. We may suppose that the Apostle here, as elsewhere, proceeded to explain that the times of this

ignorance of the past, which God had winked at or paid no attention to, were now ending; that a new phase or turn of his great Divine Plan had come. And now all men everywhere are admonished to repent, to turn from sin, to strive to come near to God in reverence and obedience, and to hope for eternal life in his provision. Doubtless he explained that the foundation for these hopes and these commands to repent were laid in the great fact that God had given his Son to be man's Redeemer, and by and by man's Restorer. No doubt he explained to them that every effort toward righteousness and Truth and godliness would have its reward, while every wilful sin would surely, at some time, have its punishment, either in the present age or in the age to come. No doubt also he showed the people that the Divine call of the present time is intended merely to call out of the world a "little flock" of saintly followers of Jesus to be his Bride in the Kingdom.

However, it was probably only a few days after this that some other Jews came to Lystra, zealous as Paul of Tarsus himself had been to oppose the message respecting the Nazarene. The benighted people, who one day were ready to do sacrifice to St. Paul as a god, shortly afterward, under the envious slanders stirred up by the Adversary, stoned him and then dragged him out of the city and left him to be devoured by beasts and birds. But evidently some disciples had been made, for as we read, "As the disciples stood around about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe." Such a man with such a spirit was necessarily a force wherever he went; a force for good, as he had once been a force for evil, because now the spirit which energized him was a consecrated one, a holy one. There is a lesson and example here for all of us which we must not miss. He wisely determined that it would be unwise to do more public work at Lystra, so long as the public mind was in such a ferment. To have done so would have been merely to bring needless persecution upon the disciples who, young in the faith, might not so well have been able to stand it.

DERBE, THEN HOMEWARD BOUND

Evidently some Divine power, some supernatural strength, was accorded the Apostle, else he never could have so quickly recovered after the stoning. The explanation is, first, St. Paul's own indomitable will, which mastered his body and made it his servant; and secondly, Divine cooperation assisting him so to do. And will it not be considerably so with us? Will not faith and courage and zeal and determination effect much as to our ability to stand and withstand the trials and difficulties of life? And will not the Lord's grace be sufficient for us? And whether he permit us to be smitten down with the literal stones or the symbolic arrows, the bitter words, is he not able to succor us, that we be not overwhelmed?

Apparently the preaching at Derbe resulted in making many disciples. Then the apostles turned their faces homeward – toward Antioch, the Ecclesia which sent them forth as its representatives. Seeking not merely return, but braving return by the same way as they went, they had the opportunity of meeting with the disciples at the various places and strengthening them and encouraging them in the good way, the "narrow way." Nor was there any deception in their preaching. They did not tell believers that shortly they would find themselves prospering in their business interests by becoming disciples of the Crucified One. They did not tell them that they would find Christianity the passage way into the social circles of the wealthy and refined. On the contrary, their message was in harmony with our Lord's words, "In the world ye shall have tribulation. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." (John 16:33.) Again, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you;" (1 John 3:13.) "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." – Matt. 5:11.

So we read that, as they journeyed, they "confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and explaining to them that through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God" – that this is the Divine arrangement for the perfecting of our characters and for our testing as respects our fitness for joint-heirship with our Lord. Let us not forget, dear friends, that the present evil world (age) has not yet closed; that Satan is still its Prince, and that tribulation is still the cost of a place in the Throne! Expecting this, persecution will not disappoint us when we receive it. As with our Lord, we may find that "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" – his own people, his own nation.

Be strong!
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do and loads to life;
Shun not the struggle – face it; 'tis God's gift.

Be strong!
It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong;
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
Faint not – fight on! Tomorrow comes the song.

THE CRIPPLE AT LYSTRA – R. 5891

ACTS 14:8-20

"He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength."
– Isaiah 40:29

LEAVING Antioch of Pisidia, St. Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium, about one hundred miles distant. There also they preached the Word faithfully; and there also opposition was aroused and persecution threatened. The record is that "when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra." They did not permit fear to hinder them from preaching the Gospel with courage, neither did they fear threats; but when the persecution took a positive form, they fled. In so doing, they were following the Lord's instructions. He did not say, "Be fearful of persecution, withhold your Message and put your light under a bushel"; but He said the very reverse. Nor did He say, "Be fearful, and flee when there is no danger." On the contrary He said, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another."

Arriving at Lystra, they began afresh to preach the Gospel, as courageously as though there had been no previous opposition. Amongst the auditors was a cripple, presumably a Jew or a proselyte, who manifested much interest in the Apostle's words. Perceiving that the man had faith, St. Paul stopped in his sermon and called out to him, "Stand upright on thy feet!" This was a thing that the man had never before done; but he had the necessary faith and obeyed the Apostle's command. Thus a miracle resulted, evidently to the astonishment of the entire congregation. The effect upon the people was electrical; and they shouted in their own dialect, "The gods have come down to visit us!"

The city of Lystra figured as the scene of a mythological event. The tradition was that Jupiter and Mercury, two of the gods of mythology, had once come to Lystra in the form of men, and had been refused lodgings everywhere until they came to the lowly hut of a poor man, who entertained them to the

best of his ability. The gods rewarded him by turning his hut into a gorgeous temple, and punished the remainder of the citizens with a flood. This tradition was very old, and was perpetuated by a statue of Jupiter at the city's gate as its protecting god.

It is easy to discern how a comparatively ignorant and superstitious people might jump to the conclusion that the visit of St. Paul and Barnabas was a repetition of this visit of Jupiter and Mercury, handed down to them through tradition. St. Paul they called Mercury, because in their tradition Mercury was the orator, the speaker; and Barnabas they called Jupiter. Forthwith the priest of Jupiter prepared to offer a sacrifice of oxen before the statue of Jupiter at their city gate, in honor of the supposed gods present with them as men, in the persons of Barnabas and St. Paul.

NOBILITY OF THE MISSIONARIES

The missionaries were probably quietly conversing with some of the more interested ones, when they heard of the commotion in the city and of the sacrifice about to be offered. Not for a moment did they think of taking advantage of the superstition of the people to make of themselves some great ones. Nor did they attempt to turn the event to a service of the Truth by claiming that God was Jupiter, that our Lord Jesus was Mercury, and that they themselves represented the Father and the Son.

On the contrary, most earnestly and simply did they entreat the people to desist, explaining that they were nothing but imperfect men like the populace themselves – "men of like passions" – that their mission was the very reverse of what the Lystrians supposed, and that Jupiter and Mercury were only products of imagination, ignorance and superstition. The two ran in amongst the excited populace while the latter were preparing for the sacrifice; and even then with difficulty, amidst protests of their own nothingness, did they restrain the people from sacrificing in their honor. Noble men they were; and their faithfulness to the Lord and to the Truth attested the wisdom of sending them on this missionary tour.

From this incident we may draw a lesson, helpful to all of the Lord's people who are to any extent His ambassadors, representatives, teachers of the Truth. The Truth itself, especially in the light of our day, is so wonderful, so brilliant, that it naturally reflects some of its brilliancy upon those who represent it, causing men to marvel and to say, as of old, "Whence hath this man this wisdom?" (Matthew 13:54.) In some instances it might lead to an undue deference, to an ascription of undue honor, and to a subserviency which would not be proper for the Lord's ambassadors to receive, and which they should as promptly and as thoroughly repudiate as did St. Paul and Barnabas refuse the honors which the Lystrian populace were about to bestow upon them.

From the worldly viewpoint, however, this would be an unwise course. Those who will accept flattery, adulation and honor more than is due are likely to be prospered in this course to some extent by the Adversary, and are apt to find that the worldly spirit likes to worship worldly heroes. The only wise course for the Lord's servants, therefore, is that followed by these missionaries of our lesson – to repudiate the entire matter, to confess that they are men of like passions with others, and to hold up the Word of God, hiding themselves behind it and ignoring self altogether.

Not alone will this course be profitable as respects the finding and the development of the true children of God, whom He is now gathering out of the world, but it will be profitable also for the Lord's ambassadors! for in this way they will grow in the Lord Jesus' grace and character-likeness, of which humility was a prominent trait. Thus they will best abide in the love of God.

TRUE SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS

In pointing out to the Lystrians the fact that

their ideas were vanities, the Apostle well knew that this could not bring him the favor of his hearers; for it is not human nature to appreciate being told of our follies. To work his way into their good graces he would have needed to tell them a lie – that they were very wise, that their course was a very proper one, etc. Therefore in his endeavor to be candid and to serve the Truth, he risked their disappointment and displeasure. Undoubtedly, as God's mouthpiece, he shunned not to declare the whole Message of God, whatever its results might be.

Here are good lessons for all of the Lord's people. It requires comparatively little courage to be a soldier of the Cross and faithful to the Truth amongst those of like precious faith and obedience. But it requires great courage to resist improper honor of men when we know in advance that this resistance will not only deprive us of their honor and friendship, but make us ignoble in their sight, and turn them into enemies. True soldiers of the Cross still have the same trial; and it requires hardness – a hardening campaign of experience in the Lord's service – to endure these things and come off joyful in them.

The babes in Christ, the weak, the untried, those who have not passed through trials and experiences, and developed character, are not hardened, and could not stand such experiences. Hence it is that the Apostle advises the Church that even proper exaltation to a position of service in the Church should not be accorded to a novice, lest he should be puffed up, and thus be injured himself, as well as be injurious to others. (1 Timothy 3:6.) It requires time and seasoning either to rightly accept and appreciate honors and dignities along proper lines, or to decline those along improper lines.

St. Paul pointed out to his hearers that in times past God had been permitting all nations to walk in their own ways, and had interfered particularly in the affairs of only the one nation – Israel. All other nations had been permitted to take their own course, except in so far as they might cross some feature of the Divine Plan. Thus the Prophet had expressed the matter to Israel: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) The Apostle's reference to "times past" (Verse 16) implies the change of dispensation which had just occurred in connection with the death of our Lord Jesus, the cutting off of Israel from any special favor, and the throwing open of the Gospel Call to all who have ears to hear – "to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now God was sending a Message of instruction to all nations, in order that they should turn from such vanities and should recognize the only living and true God and His Son, the world's exalted Redeemer whom the Father had ordained to become its Ruler in due time, to put down sin and death and to bless with His Reign of Righteousness all the families of the earth. The Apostle also pointed out that although God had left the nations without the instructions of the Law Covenant and the prophecies, He had given them some indications of His care, in making provision for their necessities – causing the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust, upon the evil and the good.

STONED FOR SPEAKING THE TRUTH

The sudden change of public sentiment which resulted from the Apostle's plain statements of the Truth led the Lystrians to look at the missionaries with very different eyes, now that, according to their own declarations, the two were only common men like themselves. We may even suppose that they felt rather humiliated that their superstition had aroused them to do reverence to men who repudiated it and acknowledged their unworthiness of it.

While the populace was in this spirit, certain Jews came thither from Antioch and Iconium, explaining to the Lystrians that the missionaries were imposters, working upon the credulity of the people, "turning the world upside down," raising questions about

theology, and disturbing the minds of the people. The populace was ready for just such leading in the reverse direction, and disposed to feel that somehow, if these two men were not really Jupiter and Mercury, they were pretenders and falsifiers, who had deceived the people and who should be put to death. As a result, St. Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city, and left for dead.

How erratic is the fallen human mind, in its condition of superstition and ignorance! How easily the priest of Jupiter could lead the ignorant to make gods of men, and how readily he could lead them in an opposite direction, equally wrong! But although the greatest of all the Apostles, and one of the most remarkable orators and logicians which the world has ever known, was in their midst, how few, comparatively, could he influence in the right direction – for the Truth and righteousness, in obedience to God!

In many respects the world is the same today as it was then, although civilization and general intelligence have done much to lift it out of that abject benightedness which leads to idol worship, although Mohammedanism, Confucianism, Churchianity and a certain kind of Christianity have put a veneer of respectability, reason and common sense upon it. Nevertheless, under this veneer the masses are still in a very unsatisfactory condition. They are still disposed to be humbugged, disposed to appreciate those who are boastful and pretend to be great, disposed to worship that which demands worship rather than that which is worthy of it, disposed to misunderstand God and His Plan and to consider these from a devilish standpoint rather than to appreciate the lengths, breadths, heights and depths of the Love of God.

A REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE

But God was not through with the Apostle Paul. He was not stoned because of God's indifference, nor because of the Almighty's lack of power to protect His servant. On the contrary, it is quite probable that the Lord was teaching the Apostle some great lesson, valuable both to himself and to the Church to whom he ministers even today in the matter of these experiences. Quite probably the Apostle, while being stoned, remembered afresh the death of St. Stephen, to which he had consented. Quite probably, too, the result was a fresh realization of his own unworthiness to be so prominent a representative of the Lord and of His Truth.

Had the incident of the sacrificing not been thus followed by some trying experience, who knows but that the Apostle might have felt a little of self-gratulation, such as would be natural to any man who had renounced voluntarily honors thrust upon him. He might have been disposed to glory in his strength of character; but his experiences led him in an opposite direction, as he himself subsequently wrote. (Romans 5:3-5.) All of the Lord's faithful ones may learn good lessons here – learn to trust in the Lord's providences in all of their affairs, not only in those which seem favorable, but also in those which are apparently working disadvantage and disaster. Concerning St. Paul the Lord had said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." (Acts 9:15,16.) From this lesson we may infer that when the Lord's servants are permitted to suffer for His name's sake – not for wrong-doing, not for anger, malice, hatred, strife, evil speaking, etc., but for His sake – it is an attestation of the Lord's favor, in the acceptance of their sacrifice, as in the type Abel's sacrifice was accepted with fire.

As the disciples stood about the prostrate form of St. Paul, supposing that he was dead, the Apostle arose and returned to the city.

HOMEWARD BOUND

Their entire public preaching at Lystra was at an end; and the next day the missionaries went to Derbe, a distance of thirty-five miles. This implies that the Lord wrought a

wonderful miracle in St. Paul, in that he was able to continue his journey on the very next day after having received so severe treatment as a stoning unto apparent death. The Lord sometimes works marvelously for His people, as in this instance. At other times He leaves them to the general vicissitudes of life as other men.

No particulars are given regarding the ministry of the Truth at Derbe. We may presume that it was without special incident. Having gone thus far, the missionaries determined to retrace their steps, instead of proceeding and returning homeward by the nearer route – via Tarsus, St. Paul's home city. Apparently their motive in so doing was their realization that the little groups of believers at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia would by this time need some encouragement and establishment in the Truth; that because of the fierce opposition in these places there would probably be more or less contention and trouble, and questions would arise which the new converts would not be competent to answer.

This was pastoral work; and in the homeward journey there is no intimation that the missionaries attempted further mission work. They had no expectation whatever of converting all the people in these cities. They understood the Plan of God too well to have any such expectations as modern mission workers seem to have. They knew very well that the mission of the Gospel was not to convert the world, but to select out of the world a special people for His name. (Acts 15:14.) They had witnessed the Truth to these people, and had confidence that the Lord was with them and that only such as had the hearing ear would be reached, either by the missionaries or by those who had already been enlightened.

Accordingly the two contented themselves with the work of upbuilding the "little flock," encouraging them to make their calling and election sure to a place in the Millennial Kingdom which, in God's due time, the Age to come, shall be used of the Lord in the world's blessing, the world's conversion, the world's uplift.

Doubtless the brethren in these various places were surprised that if the Gospel were of God, its servants, its ministers, should be so at the mercy of the forces of evil. This may have tended to shake their confidence considerably; for the natural expectation would be that God would protect His servants. St. Paul explained this to the believers, declaring that tribulations are necessary for the perfecting of the saints, for the trial of faith, for the testing and the preparing of those who would be joint-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom; and that after the permission of evil shall thus have served its purpose of keeping the "little flock" separate from the world and of polishing and refining them for the Kingdom, then the time will come when Satan shall be bound, and when the righteous shall no more be persecuted, but shall reign as joint-heirs with their Lord and Head in His Kingdom.

A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES – R. 2150

ACTS 14:11-22

"I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles." – Acts 13:47

"LET their table become a snare and a trap unto them," said the prophet respecting Israel. Their "table" consisted of the divine favors and truths which were spread before Israel. "What advantage then hath a Jew? Much every way; chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." Divine favor produced pride of heart instead of humility, and unfitted the majority of Israelites to inherit the chief blessing offered to that nation. Consequently the words of the Apostle (considered in our last lesson), logical and convincing, in that they were in harmony with the testimony of the Law and the prophets concerning the Messiah, were nevertheless coldly received, because they ran counter to certain Jewish prejudices: **(1)** Altho Paul preached a Jewish Messiah it was the crucified One. **(2)** If his message were true, it reflected very discreditably upon the heads of their nation and church, of whom they had been accustomed to boast as the greatest and holiest teachers of the world. **(3)** If the Apostle's message were true, it vitiated if it did not utterly destroy their long cherished national hopes that Israel would shortly be the great nation of earth, in principal power, instead of Rome. The Messiah for whom they hoped was not the meek and lowly crucified One whom the Apostle preached, but a mighty, earthly conqueror of men and nations. **(4)** If the Apostle's preaching were correct, Israel was no longer in a place of preference above the other nations, and those who would accept Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, whether Jews or Gentiles, would become the holy and divinely recognized Kingdom on a common level. The various promises which in their selfishness they misinterpreted, served to blind them to the pure, true light of the gospel as it now shone upon them.

But those of their number who had been proselyted from amongst the Gentiles had less cause for stumbling on these points, being less prejudiced by national pride and selfishness. These seem to have heard the message with true appreciation and inquired for further opportunities of meeting and hearing more of the good tidings, and the privilege of bringing with them Gentile friends who were feeling after God (verse 42). The result of the second meeting was a little nucleus of believers. By and by the news of the new Jewish gospel became noised abroad throughout the city, the result being a large concourse to the synagogue on the following Sabbath.

Here was a new line of temptation to reject the gospel, which bore upon such Jews as were not in proper condition of heart to receive it; the concourse of the Gentiles made them "envious." They said within themselves: We have tried long and earnestly to make an impression upon these Gentiles, but they seem to have no ear for the Law of Moses, few of them attend our meetings: but now that these missionaries of a new gospel have come they seem both willing and anxious to hear them. The result will be that they will despise the Law of Moses, and claim that our church is breaking up, and that after waiting for Messiah for centuries our holiest people crucified him. Thus we shall become a reproach in the eyes of our neighbors, even if we reject this new gospel, and still more so if we receive it. Their selfishness and envy triumphed, and then they began to think of and use all the arguments they could find in opposition to the teachings of Paul – even "blaspheming" the Messiah whom he preached. Thus the greatest and grandest truths become the most crucial tests, stumbling the proud and selfish, and lifting up and blessing the humble and devout. There is a great lesson here for all. As our Lord said, "Take heed how ye hear."

Then Paul and Barnabas told them very plainly that while it was necessary that the

gospel should be preached first to Israel, as per divine promise, it was nevertheless now to be extended beyond them to all Gentiles. As usual he quoted them a text on this subject from the old Testament, saying, Thus the Lord through the prophet commanded us: "I have set thee [Christ] to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." The rightly disposed among the Gentiles were glad of this message, but the Jews, who should have rejoiced at the broadening of the divine mercy and grace, only hardened their hearts the more against the message; because the light and favor which they had already received had not dissolved the selfishness of their natural hearts.

Concerning the Gentiles it is written, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" – better translated, "As many as were disposed for everlasting life believed;" – as many as were in the right attitude of heart, who desired reconciliation with God and eternal life along the lines preached by the apostle, believed.

But as usual the majority were in opposition to the truth, and amongst their number were found some of the most religious and most prominent. These raised the persecution, and "the brethren," obeying the Word of the Lord, "When they persecute you in one city flee unto another," shook off the dust from their feet and departed for Iconium, where, notwithstanding the prejudice which spread from Antioch, quite an interest was aroused; and when later an endeavor was made to stone them there they fled to Lystra, the scene of the present lesson, where the apostle Paul performed a very notable miracle, healing a cripple. The people, seeing it, came to the conclusion that as their heathen mythologies told of the visits there of gods in the form of men, in the past, this must be another such occasion. Barnabas, the elder and more venerable looking of the two, they called Jupiter; and Paul, the fluent speaker, they called Mercury. When the brethren found that they were about to do sacrifice to them, they went quickly into the crowd, explaining that they were merely men, and quite in opposition to such procedure were there for the purpose of explaining to them the true God and the true sacrifice for sin.

What a temptation would have been here for any not well controlled by the Lord's spirit! How many arguments the world, the flesh and the devil could bring up to encourage them in accepting the homage of the people? It would have been a pleasant experience to be treated as gods, feasted and honored, as a change from their usual experiences of privation, persecution and tribulation. They might have reasoned, moreover, that by accepting a little homage they might gain a larger amount of influence with the people and thus pave the way for a gradual presentation of the gospel. Or they might accept the homage applied to themselves in a symbolic fashion as true, might speak of the Lord Jesus as a still greater God than themselves, and Jehovah as the Almighty God above all, and might thus put a favorable turn to the superstitions of the people. But all of this would have been subterfuge which would have done injury not only to the people and to the gospel, but also to the brethren themselves. And altho they did no more than their duty in resisting the homage as they did, nevertheless we note in the fact that they did it with alacrity, the proper spirit of loyalty to the one God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the properly prompt resistance of every suggestion of the adversary towards self-aggrandizement or self-exaltation. Would that this noble spirit were fully exemplified in all of the Lord's people! Let us take well to heart the lesson of promptness in resisting the devil's baits for the weak points of our earthly natures. We are not ignorant of his devices.

The apostle immediately made this mistaken reverence a text for a discourse in which he presented to his hearers, the one true God as the source of every blessing.

But persecution followed them, and the same people who at one time were ready to offer them sacrifices, stoned Paul as they supposed

to death. Miraculously revived, he departed with Barnabas to the next field of labor, Derbe, where he found some more (pupils) ready to enter the school of Christ as disciples.

Notwithstanding persecution in these various cities, the brethren were mindful of the interests of the Lord's flock, and returned to them for the purpose of strengthening or confirming the faith of those who already believed, but apparently with no thought of public meetings; the inference being that all who were "disposed" to accept the offers of eternal life under the gospel call had already heard the message. These, however, needed help and development. This is a point too frequently lost sight of to-day by servants of the gospel; public preaching is very proper and necessary, but in addition "the flock of God" needs constant feeding. Quite evidently the brethren had no expectation that the gospel, even when preached under plenary inspiration, would convert all, or even a majority, of the people. Knowing that God designed it for the selecting of the "little flock" to be joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom they acted accordingly.

We note that in these exhortations to believers an important place is accorded to "faith," and we have found in our own experience that a well-founded faith is essential to a well-constructed character built upon it. The second point of their exhortation to the believers was, – that "through much tribulation must we enter into the Kingdom of God." They did not tell them that all their tribulation was past and that God would protect them from any in the future, because they had believed, neither did they tell them that the Kingdom of God consisted of a work of grace in their hearts; neither did they assure them that they already were the Kingdom of God in the full sense; but on the contrary they assured them that this Kingdom of God, which Israel had failed to attain, because not ready of heart to receive their King, had been postponed of establishment until God should select from the Jews and Gentiles "a people for his name" to be joint-heirs with the Messiah in his kingdom. They would therefore have the believers wait for the Kingdom for which they pray, "Thy Kingdom come;" assuring them that the narrow path which leads to the Kingdom signifies much experience in tribulation as fitting and preparing them for a share in that Kingdom, by developing in them good characters as copies of God's dear Son.

How necessary that this should be the exhortation to believers still! The Kingdom is a great prize, and he who would attain it must run faithfully and endure hardness, and that unto the end of his race. For such is laid up a crown of righteousness which the Lord of righteousness will give him in that day.

St. James at the Jerusalem Council

12 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.
13 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:
14 "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.
15 "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written. . . .

19 "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,
20 "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

Acts 15:12-15; 19-20

SETTLING DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES – R. 4374

ACTS 15:1-35

"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." – Acts 15:11

THE season of peace and prosperity, growth in knowledge and in numbers in the early Church, was followed by a season of contention and differences at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas returned from their missionary tour, and reported to the congregation which had sponsored their journey expenses. Together they, the Church and their missionaries, rejoiced in their mutual service for the Gentiles. The cause indeed was quite prosperous everywhere. Then came from Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Church, certain brethren, Hebrews by birth, who, perceiving that the Gentile Christians ignored circumcision, raised a great commotion on that score, claiming that circumcision would not save without Christ, neither would Christ's salvation be operative without circumcision. The minds of many were disturbed, and for a time a split in the Church seemed probable. But better counsels prevailed and their beloved brethren, Paul and Barnabas, were sent to Jerusalem as a committee to confer with the Apostles and Elders there. Our lesson tells of this Conference and its results.

Incidentally we remark upon the wisdom shown by these early Christians – they had "the spirit of a sound mind." They had indeed great confidence in Paul and Barnabas and realized that under their ministrations they had already received great blessings from the Lord, which fact rather contradicted the idea that they could not be esteemed proper subjects for Divine favor without circumcision. They did wisely, therefore, to consider that the will of the Lord on the subject was positive and that his will would be indicated through the Apostles, of whom our Lord had said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." These Apostles, then, might properly be expected to know and to be able to advise, whether circumcision would be a bounden obligation upon the Gentiles as upon the Jews, or whether they would be loosed from that obligation which had been placed upon Israelites – upon all of Abraham's family.

THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

The kindly deference of the Apostles, one to the other at the Conference, is quite marked in this account. It is also noticeable that they based their conclusions on the subject on what they found written in the Scriptures (the Old Testament) and their leadings of Divine providence. Gradually for several years the Truth had become more and more plain to them; how that the special favor of God to the Jews had given place to a general favor toward people of every nation, so that all men everywhere believing in the Lord, accepting his promises and consecrating their lives in harmony therewith, might henceforth have equal privileges and advantages with those of Hebrew birth. They knew of God's covenant relationship with that nation, and it took time for them to become convinced that the Divine program had taken another step forward. Similarly in the end of this age there are many who realize that only a "little flock" has been called and has responded, sacrificed, under the present High Calling. It is difficult for these to grasp the thought that a change of dispensation is at hand and that God intends to complete the work of this age for the "elect" and to inaugurate a new work for the new age, for the non-elect, for the benefit of "all the families of the earth."

The conclusions of the Conference are given us in few words, namely, that so far as God is concerned, he had recognized believers of Gentile birth by his holy Spirit in just the same way in which he had recognized believers of Hebrew birth, "and put no difference between

us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) What more could be asked? And these Gentiles had received all this favor of God without having come under the ***bondage*** of the Law Covenant. Why, they wisely asked, should we put a yoke upon them, when God has made no such requirement? They realized that the Law Covenant was indeed a yoke. More than this, that it was so heavy a yoke that neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear it. Christ had relieved them of the yoke of the Law Covenant. Why should they put it upon brethren to whom the Lord had never given it?

Going beyond this, even, they recognized that in some respects the Gentile, free from the Law, never having come under that yoke, held the superior position of the two; hence the statement, "We (Hebrews) believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ***we*** shall be saved, even as ***they*** (Gentiles)."

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

We have in Vs. 22-29 the decision of the Apostles on the question. They not only wrote it out, but sent it at the hand of two of their trusted brethren, Judas-Barnabas and Silas, with Paul and Barnabas, that they might have the matter in written and in oral testimony. The declaration was that the disquieting teachings had not been authorized by the Apostles at Jerusalem. Then they briefly summed up, not as Law, but as "necessary things," the following: –

(1) Abstain from sacrifices to idols;

(2) And from blood;

(3) And from things strangled;

(4) And from harlotry.

It was not intimated that abstinence from these things would make them Christians, for nothing but faith in Christ and consecration to him and endeavor to walk in his steps could constitute them Christians. By these recommended abstentions they declared, "It will be well with you"; you will find these recommendations profitable to you as followers of the Lord. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul has pointed out most forcefully that "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," because love for God would control the life as respects holiness, and love for our neighbor as respects earthly justice. The things here recommended were necessary to a preservation of the fellowship of the "Body" composed of Jews and Gentiles of their different education and sentiments. Without discussing whether or not harm could come to the meats sold in the markets, by reason of pagan ceremonies in connection with their killing, the advice was that these be abstained from, because Jews certainly would consider the eating of such meats as participations in the heathen idolatry – even though from the broad standpoint of fact the idol, being nothing but wood or metal or stone, could neither profit nor injure the food. Nevertheless, it was advisable that the Gentile Christians abstain from the use of their liberty in this direction, out of deference to the weaker brethren, Jews and Gentiles, who could not so deeply philosophize and whose consciences might be injured.

A similar thought attaches to the prohibition of the use of blood. To the Jew it was forbidden, and under his covenant it was made a symbol of life – to partake of it would imply responsibility for the life taken. Moreover, in the typical ceremonies of the Law the prohibited blood was used as a symbol representing the sin-offering; for by the blood atonement for sins was effected. To emphasize these typical lessons the Jew had been forbidden to use blood. And there may be other, sanitary, reasons connected with the matter, which are not yet known to us. These prohibitions had never come to the Gentiles, because they had never been under the Law Covenant; but so deeply rooted were the Jewish ideas on this subject that it was necessary to the peace of the Church that the Gentiles should observe this matter also.

The things strangled meant animals taken in traps, whose blood was not shed or drained out by bleeding to death, as the Jewish Law required of all meats that should be eaten. This restriction was necessary to the harmony between the two branches of spiritual Israel – that which came from Judaism and that which came from the Gentiles.

If they did not wish to be contentious and cause divisions in the Church, the Gentile brethren would surely be willing to restrain or sacrifice their liberty respecting these matters. The fourth restriction specified was "fornication," the Greek signifying "harlotry." It is difficult to understand why one moral precept should be thus separated from others and placed on the list with ceremonial requirements. We incline rather to ask, Why not have included profanity, drunkenness, idolatry, adultery, false witness, murder, etc.? Are we to understand that the Gentiles are free to commit all the crimes in the calendar not stipulated by this Conference, and merely counseled respecting meats offered to idols, or that have died by strangulation – and the use of blood and fornication? Surely not. Rather all the requirements of the Law are included in the one law of the New Creation – Thou shalt love the Lord and thy neighbor.

Love would cover idolatry, profanity, murder, theft, false witness, adultery, but the law of Love would not so thoroughly cover the items enumerated by the Counsel. These were necessary, proper, and we are to recognize the authority of the Apostles to "bind things on earth," and that they were so guided in their public utterances that they bound nothing unnecessarily, nothing contrary to the Divine will. It is our opinion, therefore, that these items thus superadded to the Law of Love should be observed by all spiritual Israelites as representing the Divine will. As a matter of fact nearly all the butchering for our markets is in harmony with the Jewish regulations, although many Jews decline to recognize this and eat only such meats as have been inspected and approved by their rabbis.

The wise course pursued brought its good results. Harmony prevailed, unity of spirit, fellowship amongst the members. The secret of this lay in the fact that the Lord was recognized as having the supervision of the Church's affairs, and as guiding her course and directing her way through the appointed channels, the Apostles. Similarly to-day, where honesty of heart prevails amongst the Lord's people, schisms, divisions, should be unknown. The Lord's guidance and instruction should be sought – his Word through the Apostles. Moreover, the Lord has been pleased since the Apostles fell asleep to use faithful brethren in the Church as finger-boards to indicate the right path, in harmony with his Word through the Apostles and prophets. The thing necessary is the pure heart and the honest conscience and the humble spirit.

We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
One in our love of all things sweet and fair;
One with the joy that breaketh into song,
One with the grief that trembles into prayer,
One in the power that makes Thy children free
To follow truth, and thus to follow Thee.

THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM – R. 2158

ACTS 15:1-6,22-29

"Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." – Acts 15:11

CIRCUMCISION was given to Abraham and his posterity as a sign or mark by which they attested faith in the divine promises. It was obligatory upon every Jew who would maintain his relationship to the divine promises, and it is still obligatory upon that nation. (Gen. 17:14.) We are not to forget, however, that a Jew, no less than a Gentile, is reckoned as losing earthly nationality in becoming a Christian. To all such, "old things pass away, all things become new." They are thenceforth "new creatures" in Christ Jesus, members of the "holy nation."

Inasmuch as circumcision in the flesh as a mark in the flesh had been observed for over eighteen centuries by all recognized as God's people, it should not surprise us to find that some of the early Christians, previously Jews, concluded that it was still obligatory upon all who had become children of God. All the broad distinctions between the Law Covenant and the New Covenant were not clearly distinguished at first, – even the apostles appear for a time not to have distinguished clearly on all points. Nevertheless, the Lord had held them, as the special guides of the new dispensation, and had prevented their making any declaration on the subject, until in his due time the matter was brought clearly to their attention; and then they were guided aright.

The Apostle Paul seems to have been the first to get a broadly comprehensive view of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the New Covenant provisions; and we are not to forget that he was probably helped miraculously to this clearness of perception by being granted "visions and revelations" more than all the others. Barnabas, his companion in the missionary tour, was naturally the first to share this knowledge, and was evidently in full sympathy with the Apostle Paul in resisting the teachings of certain Jews who attempted to Judaize the erstwhile Gentiles who chiefly constituted the Antioch Church. That that Church was in good spiritual health is evidenced by the fact that they were anxious to have the truth, whatever it might be. Accordingly they requested that Paul and Barnabas and certain of their company might consult with the apostles and elders at Jerusalem respecting the propriety of circumcision and the general observance of the Mosaic law on the part of those who were not Israelites by birth. And this plan was followed.

It was now nearly twenty years since our Lord's resurrection; and as a result of the efforts put forth by believers, Christians were now to be found in little groups throughout Asia-Minor and Syria. The brethren made use of the journey to Jerusalem as an opportunity to refresh the hearts of God's people in the various cities enroute, and these fellow Christians in turn gladly entertained them as members of the Lord's body; – setting a good example of hospitality.

Arrived at Jerusalem, they were warmly welcomed by the apostles and friends of the truth who had heard much concerning their missionary journey and its good results. Evidently, before they got to a statement of the real object of their visit, a class similar to those who had gone down to Antioch took exceptions to the method which the brethren had used amongst the Gentiles. They probably inquired, Were all the believing Gentiles whom you evangelized commanded to be circumcised, and instructed that they should keep the law of Moses? This opened up the question at once, and led to the announcement that the settlement of this question was the very object of their visit. Accordingly a council of the apostles and elders was called.

Verses 7-21 give probably but a small portion of the discussion. It would seem that the question, What is the responsibility of converts amongst the Gentiles toward the law of Moses? had never come up for consideration previously, and the apostles, it would appear, were without very positive convictions until they began to discuss the subject. Peter, one of the oldest of the disciples, and a man of strong character, pointed out that God had made choice of him as the one who should be first to open the gospel door to the Gentiles; how Cornelius was the first of these converts, and how God poured out the holy spirit upon him and thus recognized him as a son and joint-heir with Christ, while as yet he was uncircumcised, thus proving that circumcision was not essential to divine reconciliation and sonship in the household of faith under the New Covenant. He doubtless also called attention to the fact that our Lord, who instructed them to teach all nations and to baptise those who believed, gave no instructions in reference to circumcision or any of the commands of the Mosaic law. He argued, therefore, that they had no right to put upon the Gentiles, as a yoke of bondage, the law of Moses, which God had not put upon them, but only upon the Jews, and which the Jews found it impossible to bear, and from which they (believing Jews) had to be liberated through the merit of Christ.

The Apostles at the Jerusalem Council

Then Paul and Barnabas told how God had greatly blessed their ministry amongst the Gentiles, performing many miracles, etc., and in every way attesting his blessing upon their work; and yet that work had nothing in it respecting obligation to Moses' law or God's command to Abraham and his seed – circumcision.

James, our Lord's brother, was the president or chairman of the meeting, and after hearing the foregoing coincided with Peter, Paul and Barnabas, adding to the argument by citing from the prophets evidences **(1)** that the Gentiles would be received into divine favor and **(2)** that the reception of the Gentiles was not to make of them Jews, but that, on the contrary, God had certain blessed provisions for the Jews to be fulfilled subsequently, – "***After this***, I will return and build again the tabernacle of David which is ***fallen down***." Since Israel is to be recognized in the future by the Lord as distinct from the Gentiles, it follows that the particular national mark which distinguishes Jews from Gentiles was not to be abolished, – was not to be made general amongst Gentiles, even after they believed and became God's people.

The results of the conference were satisfactory to all present, and it was decided to send a statement of the results to the Antioch Church, both by writing and orally by Judas and Silas.

Probably only the substance of the letter is given in the brief recorded statement; but it is sufficient to show clearly that those who

claim that the apostles were confused upon the subject so as almost to make a split in the Church, are greatly mistaken, for in so many words they positively declare that those who went out from them and troubled the Church at Antioch, almost unsettling their faith and peace with the statement, "Ye must be circumcised and keep the law," were not representatives of the apostles, and had received no such commandment or teaching from them. It is refreshing and strengthening to our faith to note that the Lord's promise, specially to bless and use the apostles and keep them from error in their teaching, was remarkably fulfilled, as in this case. Our Lord's words to them were, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;" in other words, I will so particularly direct you that you will make no mistakes in respect to what you will command and in respect to what you will forbid.

The statement, "It seemed good to the holy spirit and to us," should not be lightly supposed to signify that the apostles "guessed at" the mind of the spirit, nor that they put their own judgment on a par with that of the holy spirit. We are to remember that they had special gifts of the spirit which guided them into the understanding of the Lord's will, and they merely assert here that not only was it the guidance of the holy spirit, but that they themselves were so in sympathy that they rejoiced that the holy spirit had not put the bondage of the law upon the Gentile converts.

The Christians at Antioch were already well instructed concerning the terms of the New Covenant, faith and the various added virtues and graces presented to us in the Pauline epistles. Such matters were not entered into by the council at Jerusalem nor referred to in the letter which they wrote in reply. The inquiry was merely respecting the obligation of the converts to be circumcised and keep the other features of the Mosaic law. The answer ignored every feature of that law, except four points; and the first three of these were mentioned no doubt as a basis of common fellowship between those who had been Jews and those who had been Gentiles; namely, **(1)** abstaining from meats that had been offered in sacrifice to idols; **(2)** abstaining from animal food that had not been killed after the manner of the Jews; **(3)** abstaining from the eating of blood. It would be almost impossible for those who had been reared as Jews to ignore these three points, and if the converts from the Gentiles did not observe them it would be a constant barrier to their social intercourse. Furthermore, the observance of the first restriction would be a benefit to those who were coming out of Gentile darkness, in that it would break them off from old customs which might be injurious. It was the custom among Gentiles at that time that much of the meat sold in their markets should first be offered in sacrifice to some idol. The Apostle Paul shows, however (1 Cor. 8:4), that, as an idol is nothing, the offering of the meat in the presence of nothing could do no harm to those who were able to understand the situation aright; but to others it might seem like sacrilege. He therefore advised the Church to abstain from eating meat offered to idols, lest it should make a brother to offend. The restriction as to the method of killing animals was that it should not be by strangulation, which would leave the blood in the veins, but by the Jewish method of bleeding them to death, which extracts the blood. Abstinence from the eating of blood in any form has probably also a sanitary reason back of it, in addition to a typical significance; for "the life is in the blood."

The mention of fornication was probably considered wise, for altho it should be understood as part of the law of Christ, yet nevertheless, since this evil was very common at that time amongst the Gentiles and in some cases even a part of their religious service, it was thought well to specify it.

ATTAINING CHRISTIAN LIBERTY – R. 3017

ACTS 15:22-33

"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." – Galatians 5:1

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY is to be sharply differentiated from the liberty of license, lawlessness, anarchy; and this lesson furnishes a good illustration of this fact. To the Jews who had been under the Mosaic ritual and its washings, fastings, feasts, new moons, sabbaths and holy days, Christian liberty meant a release from a considerable measure of these institutions, many of which were typical and educational – suited to the "house of servants," but not appropriate to the "house of sons." To the Gentiles, to whom God had never given the Law, and who were therefore not under any of its provisions or conditions or requirements, but who were under certain superstitions, wrong appetites and customs, Christian liberty meant the abrogation of all wrong customs and superstitions, and, additionally, the imposing of a law; – not the Mosaic Law and its institutions and ceremonies, however, but "the Perfect Law of Liberty;" the "Law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" – restraints of the will of the flesh, under the law of love. (Jas. 1:25; Rom. 8:2.) We are not to be surprised that both Jews and Gentiles, coming from opposite directions into the Church of Christ and its perfect law of liberty, were somewhat confused and bewildered respecting its requirements and proprieties.

It was nearly twenty years after the day of Pentecost that the conference noted in our lesson took place in Jerusalem. It was held for the purpose of reaching a decision respecting this very subject – the Law of Christ, its bearing upon Gentile converts, and upon Jewish converts – to what extent the Mosaic requirements were abolished as regarded the Jews, and to what extent the Law of Christ put restraints upon the converts from amongst the Gentiles, and to what extent these two classes, previously separated socially and religiously, by the requirements of the Mosaic Law, might now come together with full brotherly fellowship and affinity, without the violation of the consciences of any, and without unnecessary restraint of the liberties of any.

The Church at Antioch had become the center of Christianity amongst the Gentiles, and Jews born in Gentile lands. Its Gentile surroundings, no less than its membership, tended to cultivate in it a broad spirit of Christian liberty; – some of its membership, under the influence of brethren who had come from Jerusalem, feared that it had gone too far in the matter of Christian liberty, and held that Gentiles, upon accepting Christ through faith, should likewise accept Judaism and the Mosaic Law, and come as fully under the conditions of these, including circumcision, as tho they had been born Jews. Certain brethren who had recently arrived from Jerusalem accentuated these fears, and as a result there was quite a dissension in the Antioch Church, amounting, as the Greek word shows, almost to a schism, a split. But the right spirit evidently prevailed; because, instead of splitting over a vexed question, each party respected the conscientious convictions of the other, and it was wisely determined to appeal the matter to the Church at Jerusalem for such words of counsel and advice as its leaders, the apostles and elders, should see fit to give. The Antioch brethren evidently had full confidence that God had appointed the apostles, and that their conclusion on the matter would ultimately be the correct one. At the same time, knowing that the brethren at Jerusalem were surrounded by the Judaizing influence, tending rather to narrowness of view as respected the Mosaic customs, they sent their two leading representatives, Paul and Barnabas, to present before the Jerusalem Council the views which seemed to the majority of the Church to be the correct

ones, – that thus the entire subject might be fully, fairly, thoroughly investigated, and the mind of the Lord determined as accurately as possible.

This was a beautiful spirit – the right spirit; far more commendable in God's sight and in the judgment of sound-minded men than any immoderate course they could have taken. People who take the immoderate course are generally those who do not have sufficient faith in the Lord as the real Head of the Church, and in his overruling providence in the affairs of those who are seeking to know and to do his will; – they are generally those who feel too much self-assurance, as did even the meek Moses, when he erred in smiting the rock in the wilderness the second time saying: "Ye rebels, must we fetch you water out of this rock?" – Num. 20:10.

The truth has nothing to lose by fairness, openness, and a reasonable moderation and the turning on of all light obtainable. And while the Church at Antioch evidently had great confidence in Paul and Barnabas, they properly also had great confidence and respect for the apostles at Jerusalem, and reasoned that since these men all gave evidence that they were truly the Lord's special servants and mouthpieces, it would be strange indeed if meeting together and hearing all that could be said on both sides of the question, they could not arrive at a unanimous decision respecting the Lord's will, that would assure the Church in general. We commend this noble principle which is as applicable now as it was then. Today, however, as we cannot refer questions to the living Apostles, we must refer them to the recorded teaching of our Lord and the apostles, – seeking assistance in this amongst the brethren who appear to have the best knowledge of God's Word and the greatest insight into the divine plan.

EN ROUTE TO THE JEWISH CONFERENCE

The journey from Antioch to Jerusalem brought Paul and Barnabas in contact with many of the household of faith, a few, here and there, in almost every city through which they passed. Of course, the brethren were glad to hear, as these ex-missionaries were glad to tell them, of God's favors upon their missionary labors in Galatia and vicinity; and altho the brethren reached were almost exclusively Jewish converts, it is with pleasure we read that the report "caused great joy unto all the brethren." (Acts 15:3.) This shows that they had the true Christian spirit – that they had largely, if not completely, lost the Jewish prejudice and jealousy, as concerned the giving of the gospel to the Gentiles. It shows us that with the majority of the previously Jewish brethren the contention for the Mosaic Law and ceremonies implied no opposition to the Gentiles themselves, but merely a confusion of mind concerning the Lord's will on these subjects; – they had not yet discerned the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan, as they subsequently learned these, and came to appreciate the perfect Law of Liberty wherewith Christ make free indeed, in the true sense, all who become truly his.

Arrived at Jerusalem, the representatives of the Antioch congregation were met with a hearty welcome, for such is the significance of the Greek word rendered "received," in verse 4. As they had given to the others en route, so the returned missionaries gave the Jerusalem brethren detailed accounts of the Lord's blessing upon their journey, telling what miracles and wonders he had wrought, that a considerable number had believed, and how loyal, faithful and enduring were some of these newly-found brethren in Christ, who had previously been aliens, strangers, Gentiles.

There is some reason for believing that previous to this Paul and Barnabas and Titus had made a visit to Jerusalem, in which they did not, as now, appear publicly before the congregation to give their testimonies, but had secret conferences with the apostles and chief brethren, Paul explaining to them what he understood to be the perfect Law

of Liberty under the New Covenant – the will and plan of God regarding the gospel amongst the Gentiles. It would appear that the apostles had been largely influenced by those presentations, altho they had not uttered any public testimony on the subject, nor engaged in any manner in the missionary work amongst the Gentiles. Apparently they had not considered it necessary to stir up the subject to any extent, and thus possibly to breed more or less of strife amongst the Jewish converts. Thus the subject had been left for some years for gradual development and enlargement of heart and mind on the part of the believers. This thought is based upon the Apostle Paul's statement in his letter to the Galatians, on this subject. – Gal. 2.

But now the question of receiving Gentiles, and how they should be treated, and what were their obligations, etc., came up in a natural way, without forcing – rather, it forced itself for decision. The apostles and elders heard the reports of God's blessing upon the Gentiles, and offered no objection, evidently being quite in accord with the matter from the first; but, as was to be expected, there was dissatisfaction amongst brethren who previously had been Pharisees. This sect of the Jews was firmly set, not only for the Law of Moses and all of its ceremonies, but also for many additions and accretions to it; so that they were quite dissatisfied, we remember, with our Lord's observance of the Law, which we know was perfect. These, in all honesty, objected that the missionaries were too lax, too slack in their work, and that all believers should be required to be circumcised and to keep the Mosaic laws respecting fasts, new moons, sabbath days, washings, etc.

Thus the question was brought forward, and a special meeting was appointed, at which the apostles and elders heard all that was to be said on the subject, – and we read that there was "much dispute." We do not want to say a word in favor of disputes, wrangling, etc., amongst the Lord's people. On the contrary, we understand the Scriptures to teach that wranglings in general are improper, out of order, injurious to the interests of the Church and of the truth; – because such wranglings and disputes are generally about things to no profit, but to the subverting or unsettling of the believers, and especially of those who are new or weak in the faith. But it is a different matter when the question is an important one, as was this under discussion; and at such a time dispute, in the proper manner, with the spirit of love, with force and yet with kindness, love and gentleness of word and manner, is most appropriate.

We rejoice that there was such a spirit of broadmindedness in the early Church as is represented by this statement – we rejoice that when an important subject was to be considered, with a view to knowing the mind of the Lord, that there was fullest liberty granted for as much dispute or debate, in a proper manner, as was necessary to bring the whole subject before those who had it under consideration. There is a difference, however, between disputes and discussions inside the pale of faith and disputes outside that boundary. As the Apostle says, "He that is weak in the faith receive ye [do not reject him because he has not such full, strong, vigorous faith as we should like to see], but not to doubtful disputations" – do not receive him to dispute his doubts, – what he does not believe. Let him have a full opportunity for hearing the faith discussed; if his doubts do not then disappear probably he himself will disappear, – drop out of the assembly. In harmony with this we are not to recognize disputes respecting the ***foundation principles*** of the gospel of Christ. The Church is composed only of those who recognize the foundation – that Christ died for our sins, for our redemption from sin and from its penalty; and that all who would share his blessing must accept these simple facts of his death for us and his resurrection by the power of God for our ultimate deliverance; – and then in harmony with their desire to be his disciples they must make a consecration of themselves to him, to do his will and to serve his cause. These foundation principles of the

Church of Christ are not subject to dispute. Those who reject these are not of the Church and should not be heard in the Church. They are intruders; doubtless wolves in sheep's clothing, of evil and not of good intentions and ultimate results.

But as respects discussions amongst those who are truly the Lord's on any point of importance, – opportunity for freedom of discussion, within reasonable limits, is absolutely necessary to spiritual health and progress. To shut it off means to crush proper activities of thought, and in many instances means to accumulate a force which would ultimately result in an explosion, which would be damaging in some respects at least. Let us remember, in this matter, the Golden Rule; and let us accord to others differing from us the same reasonable liberty, inside the boundaries of foundation principles, that we would like to have them accord to us, if our positions were reversed.

The fact that the question at issue was – the obligation of Gentile converts to the Law, is not to be understood as signifying that the Law of Moses was recognized as being of binding force upon Jewish converts. All were bound to concede that the Law-Covenant had saved none – that Christ's fulfilment of it brought all under divine grace. It was more a question of usage – the Jews were used to circumcision which preceded the Law, used to abstaining from pork, not only merely because the Law forbade it, but because aside from the Law they considered it unclean. What the Jew did in the exercise of his liberty he thought the Gentile should be forced to do; – a very common error with many. It requires development to learn to use our consciences and liberty and to let others use theirs, even tho they differ.

When a fair hearing had been granted to both sides of the question, Peter, one of the leading apostles, and doubtless the eldest, rehearsed his experiences with Cornelius; then Paul and Barnabas were heard, and James closed the discussion. All upheld the teachings and practices of Paul and Barnabas, and cited the leadings of the Lord's spirit, as well as the prophecies of the Old Testament in corroboration of this position which, doubtless, as above suggested, they had held tentatively for some time, tho they only now thought it necessary to make a public statement regarding it. The conclusion was satisfactory to the apostles and elders and the whole Church; and an answer in harmony with this was sent to the friends at Antioch, Syria, and throughout Silicia – the regions which had been affected by the Judaizing teachers. It is here that the lesson proper begins.

To give weight to the letter, two of the prominent brethren of Jerusalem were sent with Paul and Barnabas and the letter, that they might confirm the letter orally, and thus establish the hearts of those who had been somewhat troubled by the false teachings. The letter first disclaims any authority for those persons who had, however honestly intentioned, taught error with truth, and confused the hearts of the believers on the subject of circumcision and the Law. It states also the conclusions of the conference, and commends Barnabas and Paul, calling them "beloved," and noting the fact that they had hazarded their lives in the Lord's cause. The decision rendered is expressed as being the mind of "the holy spirit and us." We may reasonably presume that the meaning of this is that the Church not only found the teachings of the Scripture and the leadings of the divine providence to be in favor of the acceptance of the Gentiles to Christian liberty, without becoming Jews or coming under the Law, but that this finding of the Lord's will was not against the wishes or prejudices of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; – that it found a ready echo, a hearty response in their hearts.

RECOMMENDATION RESPECTING OUTWARD CONDUCT

God's dealings and instructions commended themselves both to their hearts and to

their reasons, and covered four points. **(1)** Abstaining from meats offered to idols, which might appear to be giving sanction to idol worship. **(2)** Abstaining from the eating of the blood of animals. **(3)** Abstaining from eating things that had been strangled, in which the blood would remain, which would imply the eating of blood. **(4)** The avoidance of fornication.

In considering these rules we are to keep in memory the circumstances and conditions of the times, and the objects sought to be attained. **(1)** The idol worship which prevailed at that time had connected with it a great deal of sensuality, which would be contrary to the spirit of Christ in every sense of the word. **(2)** The object was to permit a ground of fellowship and brotherhood between those whose previous experiences and instructions had been lax, and those whose previous instructions had been rigid. And the things here required of the Gentiles were not merely features of the Mosaic Law, for the forbidding of the use of blood, and the explanation that it represented the life, was given long previous to Moses' day – to Noah after the flood, when he and his posterity were granted the privilege of eating meat, because of the changed conditions and the impoverishment of the race, and the need of more stimulating food. The use of blood was still more common then than now, being used not only in blood puddings, but also as a drink mixed with wine, as some today use beef extract blended with wine.

The message was received in faith by all, and caused universal rejoicing in the Church. There was a general recognition of the Lord's providential care in the Church's affairs, and this faith and confidence in God prepared all parties to receive the message on this subject, which they believed God would assuredly give them, and which they had rightly looked for through the channels which God had previously been using for their blessing and edification. Thus we have a lesson respecting the proper course of the Lord's dear people today, – not to carry disputes, even on important matters (not fundamental) to the length of rupture, division, but, with hearts anxious to know and to obey the truth, inquiry should be made of the oracles of God, and the results, after a fair hearing of all the testimony, should be conclusive, satisfactory, and bring consolation – peace and joy – so that the unity of the faith in the bonds of love may continue within the walls of Zion.

The two brethren who came as representatives of the Jerusalem Church were prophets, or public teachers, and, as was intended, they exhorted the Church in harmony with the letter they bore, and confirmed and strengthened them. Thus what might have been a serious rupture, resulting in much damage and in many roots of bitterness, antagonisms, etc., became really a means of increased blessing to all connected therewith, because wisely and properly handled. May such occasions be likewise treated by the Lord's people today, and with similar blessed results, under the guidance of the same Lord and Master who more than eighteen centuries ago guided by his Word and spirit.

THE LIBERTY WHEREWITH CHRIST HAS MADE US FREE

Our Golden Text is a precious one. The value of true liberty amongst the Lord's people cannot be overestimated. It becomes a part of their very life. It was because, under a wrong conception of union, this spirit of true liberty was crushed out of the Church shortly after the apostles fell asleep in death that the "dark ages" resulted, – with all their ignorance, superstition, blindness, persecution, etc. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century was but a re-awakening of the spirit of liberty mentioned in our text, – liberty to think inside the foundation lines of the doctrines of Christ; – liberty to believe as much or as little more, in harmony with this, as the mental conditions and circumstances will permit, without being branded as a heretic or persecuted by brethren, either in word or deed.

Strange to say, a peculiar combination – of too much liberty and too little liberty – is creeping over nominal Christendom today. The too little liberty feature objects to any discussion of the doctrines of Christ, and the teachings of the apostles, for fear some differences of opinion should be manifested. This is an endeavor to have an outward "union" without a union of the heart and a union of the head. It is injurious, both to those who hold the error, which cannot be exposed, and injurious also to those who hold the truth and who permit themselves thus to be bound, and hindered from growth in grace and knowledge by the proper exercise of the liberties wherewith Christ has made his people free. The general trend along this line favors the covering over, the concealment, of truths as well as errors, in a wrong assumption that the appearance of union will serve the purpose of real union, and be really effective as respects the prosperity of the true members of the body of Christ. Such a false union, however, is coming and will be effected, and to such extent cause prosperity in the nominal church, but only for a brief season, when the time of trouble shall overwhelm all.

On the other hand the too great liberty which we see drawing on, is that represented by the teachings of the higher critics and evolutionists. Their teachings are given in quiet, in the theological seminaries, at the fireside, in the daily interchanges, and in the pulpit; and any attempt to contradict these false doctrines is tabooed, as being calculated to stir up strife, and destroy the unity of the Church. Thus the too great liberty and the too great bondage are working together in the nominal church systems today, to thoroughly expel and ostracize the truth, and all who love it and wish to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free. It is calculated to install and multiply and qualify and honor the error, which so rapidly is gaining control, altho the control be generally denied. Let all who are the Lord's people, and who have tasted of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, see to it that they stand fast in that liberty, and as soon as an attempt is made to restrain it, if not sooner, let them get out completely from all the bondages of human systems, that they may stand firmly and loyally with the Lord, our Redeemer, our Instructor, our King.

The question may arise, Does this direction to abstain from meat offered to idols conflict with the Apostles' later teachings addressed to the Corinthians? (1 Cor. 8.) We answer, No. The Apostle is not advocating the eating of meat previously offered to idols; but on the contrary, is answering some who so practiced. He is admitting the logic of their argument, that an idol being nothing but so much wood or metal or stone the meat could be neither benefited nor injured by the offering. But he shows that the restriction should be practiced in the interest of some of less logical mind who would be unable to comprehend this and who would thus be led to defile their consciences, and thus into sin; – which might abound more and more, eventually, to their destruction. For the voice of conscience must be obeyed: it is at our peril that it is violated – no matter how erroneous and superstitious may be its standards. Let conscience be educated; but let its ignorance never be violated. Every violation of conscience is so much of character destruction. All need to remember this in respect to their own consciences as well as in dealing with others – especially with children.

Excerpt from
THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM
– R. 5892

THE NECESSITY FOR THESE RESTRICTIONS

The things recommended by the Conference were necessary to a preservation of the Body of Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles of different education and sentiments. Without discussing whether or not harm could come to the meats sold in the markets, by reason of pagan ceremonies in connection with the killing of animals, the Conference advised that these be abstained from, because Jews would certainly consider the eating of such meats as participation in heathen idolatry – even though from the broad standpoint of fact the idol, being nothing but wood or stone or metal, could neither profit nor injure the food. Nevertheless, it was advisable that the Gentile Christians abstain from the use of their liberty in this direction, out of deference to the weaker brethren, Jews and Gentiles, who could not so deeply philosophize and whose consciences might be injured.

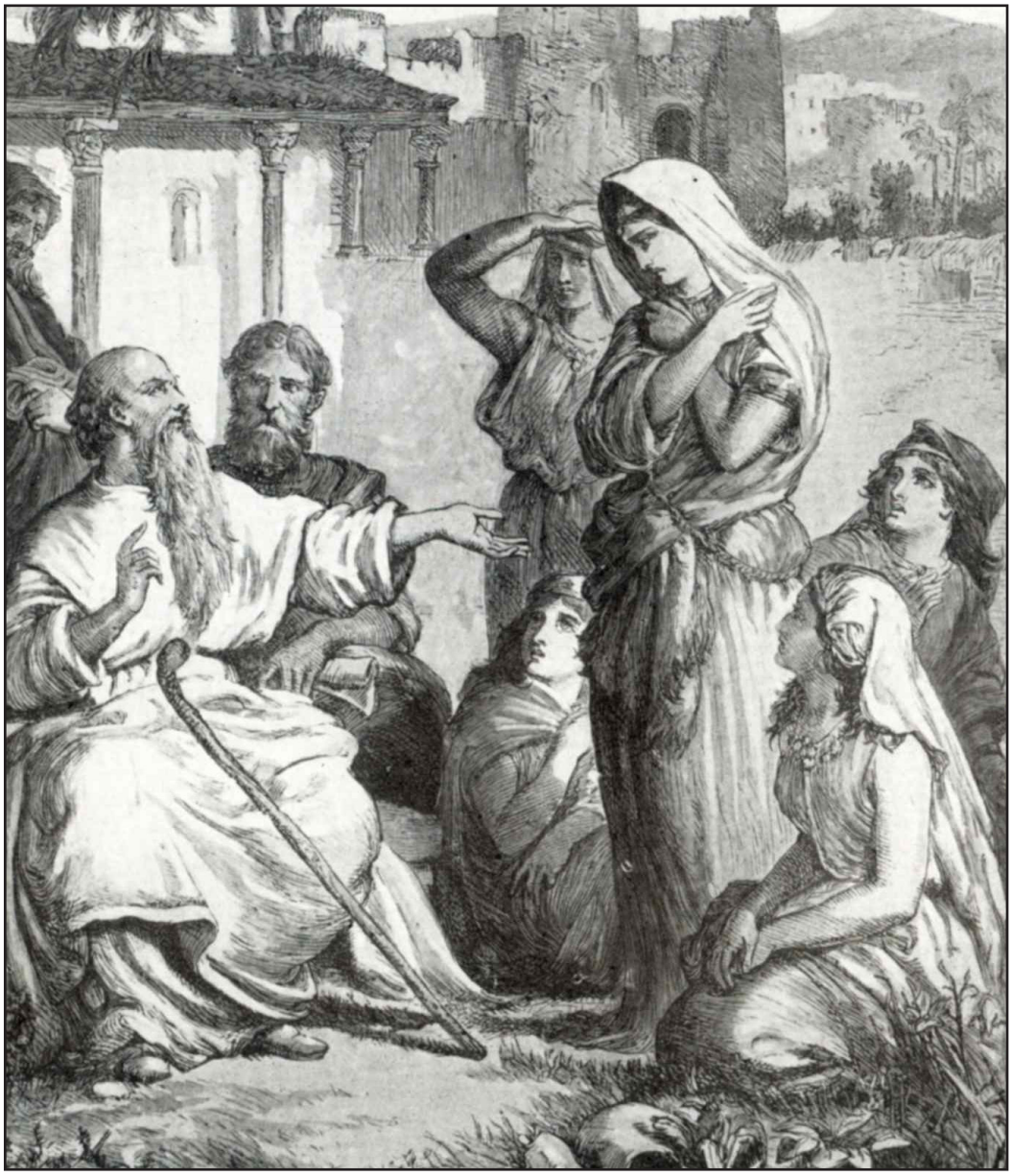
A similar thought attaches to the prohibition of the use of blood. To the Jew it was forbidden. (Leviticus 17:10-14.) Under the Law Covenant, blood was made a symbol of life; and to partake of it would therefore imply responsibility for the life taken. Moreover, in the typical ceremonies of the Law the prohibited blood was used as a symbol to represent the sin-offering; for atonement for sins was effected by the blood. To emphasize these typical lessons the Jew had been forbidden to use blood. There may be other reasons, sanitary or otherwise, connected therewith, but not yet known to us.

These prohibitions had never come to the Gentiles; for they had never been under the Law Covenant. But so deeply rooted were the Jewish ideas on this subject that it was necessary to the peace of the Church that the Gentiles should observe this matter also.

The things strangled meant animals taken in traps, whose blood was not shed, or drained out by bleeding to death, as the Jewish Law required of all meats that were to be eaten. This restriction was necessary to the harmony between the two branches of Spiritual Israel – that which came from Judaism and that which came from the Gentiles – previously separated by the Law Covenant. If the Gentile brethren did not wish to be contentious and cause division in the Church, they would surely be willing to restrain or sacrifice their liberty respecting these matters.

The last restriction specified was harlotry. The idol worship which prevailed at the time of our Study had connected with it a great deal of sensuality, which would be contrary to the Spirit of Christ in every sense of the word. It is difficult, however, to understand why one moral precept should be thus separated from others and placed on the list with ceremonial requirements. We incline to ask why were not included profanity, drunkenness, idolatry, adultery, false witness, murder, etc. Are we to understand that the Gentiles are free to commit all crimes not stipulated by this Conference?

Surely not! Rather, all the requirements of the Law are included in the one Law of the New Creation – Love for God and man. Love would cover profanity, murder, theft, false witness, adultery; but the Law of Love would not so thoroughly cover the items enumerated by the Council at Jerusalem. We are to recognize that the Apostles were Divinely authorized to bind things on earth; and that they were so guided in their public utterances that they bound nothing unnecessarily, nothing contrary to the Divine will. It is our opinion, therefore, that these items thus superadded to the Law of Love should be observed by all Spiritual Israelites as representing the Divine will. As a matter of fact, nearly all the butchering for our markets is in harmony with the Jewish regulations, although many Jews decline to recognize this, and eat only such meats as have been inspected and approved by their rabbis.



Paul With Lydia

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 16:14

"COME OVER AND HELP US" – R. 4399

ACTS 15:36; 16:15

"Come over into Macedonia and help us." – Acts 16:9

TODAY'S lesson is connected with the introduction of the Gospel into Europe. After the conference at Jerusalem, noted in a previous lesson, Paul and Barnabas remained for a time at Antioch. But seeing that there were many laborers there and that a larger field was little worked, a second missionary journey was planned. Barnabas and his nephew John Mark went in one direction, while with St. Paul went Silas (Sylvanus), with whom he had become acquainted at the Jerusalem conference and who is reported to have been a Roman citizen, as was St. Paul. It is with this latter couple that we have to do in this lesson. Their course lay through Syria and Cilicia, Derbe and Lystra. In these places they confirmed the faith of such as had already been accepted of the Lord through the Apostle's first missionary tour, and the working of the Truth during the interim. It was at Lystra that Timothy was found, a young man of Jewish mother and well trained in the Scriptures by her and his grandmother – his father being a Greek. We note that amongst the things presented to the Churches was the decision of the Jerusalem conference that the Jewish Law should not be considered binding to the Gentiles, except in certain features noted in a former lesson.

After good success in the mission up to this point the Apostle had in mind a journey through Asia Minor, but apparently things went unfavorable until the Apostle concluded that the Lord was hindering their efforts and in perplexity began to think of other fields of labor. His moment of uncertainty was the Lord's opportunity for directing him. He dreamed that he saw a man dressed in the costume of the Macedonians beckoning to him and saying, "Come over and help us." The Apostle accepted this as of Divine leading and promptly began the journey which took him into Europe. We have here an evidence of God's supervision of all the interests of his Church. He was not averse to permitting the message to go into Asia Minor, for it did go there later, possibly at a more opportune time. But this was the time for sending the message to Europe.

Evidently the Lord could have directed his message southward through Africa and away from Europe, but there is a "due time" connected with every feature of the Divine Plan – and now, by Divine arrangement, the message of God's grace in Christ was to go to the Greeks, who at this time were recognized as the foremost people of the world in literature and the arts.

It is supposed that it was about this time that Luke, the physician, became attached to Paul's company. A man of education, a scribe, as well as a physician, the Lord evidently provided him as St. Paul's amanuensis, that thereby the Apostle's letters should reach many of the Churches of that time, as well as the Lord's people from then until now. Thus it came that Luke wrote not only a version of the Gospel, but also the Book of Acts and nearly all of St. Paul's epistles. Here we have another illustration of the privileges of the various members of the Body of Christ. Luke could not be the Apostle Paul nor could he do St. Paul's work; but he could be used of the Lord honorably and efficiently in a greater spread of the Truth.

So it is with us. We cannot be apostles. We cannot do anything very great; but, if filled with the Spirit of the Lord, it is our privilege to be used to some extent in some service of the Truth. And any service for the Lord and for the brethren, even to the washing of feet and any menial service, is, as our Lord shows, honorable and a privilege.

LYDIA OF THYATIRA

Philippi, one of the chief cities of Macedonia, in Greece, appears to have been the first place for the preaching of the good tidings in Europe. As usual, on the Sabbath day the Apostle and companions sought for some who worshiped God, who hoped for the Kingdom that God had promised, knowing that such would be the better prepared to receive the message he had to deliver; that Jesus had appeared as the Redeemer and had laid the foundation for the Millennial Kingdom in the sacrifice of himself; that the blessings of his sacrifice would ultimately be made available to every creature, but that now, in advance of the dealing with the world in general, the Lord is calling out a Spiritual Israel, a "little flock," to be his kings and priests with Jesus in the administration of the Millennial blessings.

Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi, and matters may have looked very unfavorable to Paul and his companions. However, they heard of a little religious meeting held every Sabbath by the river side, outside the city gate. It was a prayer meeting principally and place of Divine fellowship. Not having the facilities of a synagogue they probably had no Scripture parchments, and hence no reading of the Law, but merely prayer and worship. All this was favorable to the Gospel message the Apostle had to present. He spoke to those who resorted thither, commending the importance of their worshipful condition of heart and the importance of praise to the Giver of all good. Then he proceeded to declare the good tidings of the sacrifice of Jesus, of his death and resurrection, and his Second Coming in power and great glory. He showed surely that the invitation now being given was for joint-sacrifices with Jesus whose reward would be joint-heirship with him in the Millennial Kingdom, as members of ***his Body***, the Church.

However many or few were at the meeting there was one present whose heart was in the right condition to receive the message – a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple. Dyes were much more expensive in olden times than now and the secret knowledge of how to make them was turned to financial profit. Thus it is supposed that Lydia was in quite comfortable circumstances financially. Not only did the Truth open her heart, enlightening the eyes of her understanding, but she was prompt to obey it in full consecration; and prompt to symbolize that consecration in water baptism – "She and her household."

It is not always that religious parents have religiously inclined children. Several instances of the kind are mentioned in the Scriptures. Personal experience teaches us also that the parent who is earnestly consecrated to the Lord and guided by his Word has generally a good influence upon those nearest to him and directly under his care. Such an influence should be hoped for, prayed for, sought for by every parent. But it cannot be obtained except by carefulness, circumspection of word and deed. These in subjection imply that the very thoughts of the heart are brought into captivity to the will of God in Christ. Nevertheless parents who have failed to discern the Truth and recognize its responsibilities until their children have outgrown parental instruction must not chide themselves unmercifully if their children do not respect them and their religious convictions. Rather they should remember that the Lord is thoroughly acquainted with the situation and will hold them accountable only for what they do or do not after they have come to know him and to an opportunity for understanding the instructions of his Word respecting their own lives and the training of their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

"AND SHE CONSTRAINED US"

The fact that Lydia's household believed implies that she was the mother of adult children. And these were so thoroughly under her influence that they worshiped with her the true God, neglecting the idolatries prevalent in Philippi. We may infer that she was a

widow, since her husband is not mentioned. Hence it was her right, without conference with anybody, to invite the Apostle and his companions to share the hospitality of her home. She seems properly to have realized that, instead of honoring them, she was honoring herself and her home by having such guests – the ministers of God, the brethren of Christ – under her roof. Note her language when inviting, "She besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." The latter statement implies that the Apostle was not too ready to force himself upon anybody, that he did not urge, saying, Surely myself and companions who have preached to you should be served by you in temporalities – though that was the Truth. Rather the Apostle made no reference to temporalities. Indeed, after the suggestion of Lydia had been made it was apparently not too quickly accepted, but with the indication that the disciples of Jesus had no desire to intrude upon others. This is implied in the statement that they were "constrained," gradually drawn or led to accept invitation. How beautiful it is to see God's children wisely exercised in such matters! How much more is their influence upon one another for good!

This lesson may be considered as specially teaching Divine supervision of the true Gospel and its ministers. Yet how diversified God's dealings and how necessary that his children in ministering the Truth should have fullest confidence in his wisdom, love and power! Note the sharp contrast that, after specially guiding the apostles to this place and then to a very small meeting and apparently one family of converts, the Lord next allows what seems to be a great catastrophe to befall his faithful servants. This trial came through the evil spirits. A young woman, possessed (obsessed) by an evil spirit (one of the fallen angels), was used for fortune-telling, etc., the spirit working through her, divining or giving intelligence of things that were lost, telling fortunes, etc. She was a slave girl and very profitable to her owners – a syndicate apparently of influential men.

For several days, as the Apostle and companions went to and from the home of Lydia attending to the Lord's work, this obsessed girl followed them, shouting in a loud voice, "These be the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Of course, the girl did not know them, but the evil spirits knew them. To what extent they forecasted the results we may not definitely know, but quite possibly what occurred was what they had premeditated, namely, that the Apostle would cast out the evil spirit and that this would bring upon them and any converts a violent attack from the owners of the girl and their friends and all whom they could arouse to a frenzy of excitement, of wrath and rioting. Or the evil spirit may simply have told the truth without considering the possibility of the Apostle commanding it to come out of the woman – possibly supposing that they would be rather pleased with a testimony from any quarter. But we read that St. Paul was grieved as day after day this testimony was made. He was not grieved that a testimony was borne to the Truth, but grieved that it should come from such an evil source, for he knew that it would have no respect for the Truth; for any of the fallen angels who would have respect for God and the principles of righteousness would not seek to obsess humanity when it knew that it would be to their injury and contrary to the Divine will.

The S.S. teachers' instruction books will probably suggest to them that this woman had hysteria or was somewhat demented. But this is out of accord with the facts of the case, as Scripturally set forth, and quite contrary to the words of the Apostle. He said not a word to the young woman, assuming that she was not at all accountable. He addressed the evil spirit as such, and commanded it in the name of Jesus to come out of the woman – just as Jesus and the apostles under his instruction had frequently cast out these spirits.

WITH A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION

Just as the owners of the swine were angry with our Lord because of the loss of their swine, when the "legion" of demons cast out of the man entered the swine and the owner suffered loss, so here; while the Apostle and all who had proper hearts would rejoice that the woman was free from the evil spirit's power, her masters, who profited by her sad condition, were made angry. Their pocket-books were touched. They could not legally attack the Apostle because he had done the woman no harm. But they could have revenge and hence raised a riot, claiming that these men with the new religion were interfering with the rights of the people of Philippi, which was a Roman province in Greece.

And the Lord permitted all this; yea, permitted the rioting to reach considerable proportions. Paul and Silas were carried before the rulers at the market-place for the imposition of sentence. The rulers, who held office specially for the preventing of rioting and for preserving order, were greatly excited and rent their garments as an indication of their distress and dissatisfaction that such a disturbance should be brought to their city. The thought was that the men against whom the populace would thus rise up must be guilty of something and deserving of punishment. They knew not that the evil spirits had to do with the arousing of the riot. As St. Paul elsewhere expressed it, "We contend not with flesh and blood merely, but with wicked spirits in influential positions."

To satisfy the mob, to restore peace quickly, the missionaries were publicly beaten, presumably with rods, and then were committed to the prison. Alas, we say, what a reward for missionary effort! What a recompense for sacrificing their lives for the Lord and the Truth – that these men should be evil-spoken of, evil thought of and evilly treated!

Let us remember that the God who ***changes not*** is our God, and has supervision of the interests of the Church to-day as then. Let us remember that he requires of us to-day, as of those missionaries, that we be willing to represent him, willing to endure hardness and thus to make full proof of our ministry – of our service for Christ and his message. Would it require faith on the part of the missionaries to accept such experiences as providential and not to think of them as evidences of the Lord's disfavor or neglect? So must we learn similar lessons of faith, in the School of Christ, and be glad to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and the apostles, and learn to rejoice in tribulations, as well as in prosperity.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."
10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:9-10

GOD'S SUPERVISION OF HIS PEOPLE AND HIS MESSAGE – R. 3022

ACTS 16:6-15

"Thou shalt be his witness unto all men." – Acts 22:15

FOR HIS SECOND missionary tour Paul chose Silas for a companion. The original plan was that he and Barnabas should go together again, but they disagreed respecting the suitability of Mark to be their companion. The result was a division of the work, Barnabas taking Mark, and revisiting the brethren in the Island of Cyprus, while Paul went overland to the churches of Galatia, probably visiting en route his home city of Tarsus. Apparently Silas, whose home was at Jerusalem, found it necessary to go there to close up his affairs, before starting on the tour, and joined Paul later in Asia Minor. This inference is based upon the fact that Luke, the historian, says "he" instead of "they," at the beginning of Paul's journey; then uses the word "they" after Paul had been joined by Silas and Timothy at Lystra, and finally uses the word "we" when he would include himself; – Luke probably joining the company at Troas.

The apostle's journeys amongst the churches of Asia Minor, planted in his previous tour, was for the purpose of their encouragement, strengthening, advancement in knowledge, and incitement to growth in grace. Doubtless also the Apostle experienced refreshment from contact with these fruits of his labor. At Lystra he found that the grace of God and the knowledge of the Gospel had reached a considerable development in a young man, probably about twenty-one years of age, named Timothy, whose father had been a Greek and his mother a Jewess, – the latter at this time, according to the Greek text, apparently a widow.

Although devoutly raised, Timothy had never been circumcised according to Jewish regulations, and when it was determined that he should accompany Paul in his missionary work the latter caused him to be circumcised. To some this has seemed strangely inconsistent, in view of the fact that the Apostle at the same time was calling to the attention of the Christian brethren wherever he went the decision of the Council of Apostles at Jerusalem – to the effect that circumcision was not necessary to Christian brotherhood. We are reminded also that the Apostle would not consent to the circumcision of Titus, who was a Gentile. (Gal. 2:3.) In view of these things, why did he countenance the circumcision of Timothy? We answer that, properly understood, the Apostle's conduct was thoroughly consistent; circumcision was no part of the Mosaic Law, but was instituted with Abraham, centuries previous, and was intended as a mark or sign upon all the children of Abraham. The council at Jerusalem did not decide that no Jew must be circumcised thenceforth; but it did decide that circumcision should not be considered ***necessary*** to a Christian. The Apostle Paul's own argument on this subject is most specific: he says, "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. – Gal. 5:6.

The thought is, that being children of Abraham, according to the flesh, is not sufficient to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus; and therefore circumcision of the flesh will not accomplish this. As the new creature is received of God as a member of the body of Christ through a living faith, he must as a new creature have the circumcision of the heart, in order to be a Spiritual Israelite, whether he was previously a Jew or a Gentile. Circumcision of the heart signifies a ***cutting off*** – a separation from the flesh, its aims, hopes, desires, etc. We see, then, that there could be no objection to the circumcision of Timothy – it would neither help nor hinder him spiritually, – if done with the clear understanding that it was only a figure, and not the real circumcision which constituted Timothy a member of the body of Christ, the Church. Timothy's mother being a Jew, he was a Jew, – even tho his father

had been a Greek. And this fact becoming known to Jews in general with whom in traveling they would come in contact, inquiry might be made as to whether or not he had been circumcised. If the answer were No, the implication would be that he had never been a good Jew but a renegade. If the answer were Yes, it would remove this obstacle and grant him correspondingly greater influence with them – a closer access to their hearts.

If there was one thing more than another characteristic of the Apostle Paul it was his honesty, his candor; and it is necessary that we should see his conduct in respect to Timothy and Titus in the proper light, in order to do him justice; – in order also to counteract a compromise spirit in some who consider that Paul's course in this matter justifies them in duplicity and compromising. It was in this perfectly legitimate way that Paul meant, "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." (1 Cor. 9:20.) That he had no thought of compromising the truth in any degree, is evident from his withstanding of Peter on one occasion, when the latter to some extent dissembled in dealing with Jew and Gentile believers. (Gal. 2:11.) This is manifest also in his letter to the Galatians, in which he most positively declares to those who had been Gentiles, that to them circumcision was not an optional matter as with the Jew; but that if they should become circumcised it would imply that they were not trusting wholly to the merit of Christ's sacrifice for their acceptance with God, their salvation; but were trusting partially to laws and ceremonies. His words to them are, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. . . . Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law: ye are fallen from ***grace***." (Gal. 5:2-4.) Let us likewise clearly distinguish between concessions in respect to forms, dress, ceremony, etc., which may properly be made to the prejudice or ignorance of those about us, and concessions of principles, which are not permissible to anyone under any circumstances.

The journey through Galatia and Phrygia having been accomplished, the next question was respecting future labors, – other fields. The Apostle's intention was to "go into [lesser] Asia" – the region in which subsequently the seven Churches of Asia were located. But for some reason this was not the Lord's plan at this time; and so we read that they were prevented or forbidden (whichever way the word might be translated) to preach the Word there. We are neither informed why nor how. The Lord possibly had some other agent or better means or more favorable time for sending the word of his grace into that quarter, as well as some other work for Paul and his company. As soon as the missionaries discerned the Lord's leading in this respect they turned their attention northward, to go into the province of Bythinia; but again the Lord's spirit, power, influence, hindered their proposed plans. So they passed onward to the coast – to Troas – doubtless wondering at the Lord's providences, and speculating as to whether or not this meant that their work for the present was accomplished, and that they should return homeward. It was at this juncture that the Lord instructed them respecting their journey, by means of a vision or dream, in which Paul saw a man dressed in the garb of Macedonia, standing before him, and beseeching him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!"

In these verses we have three positive, distinct statements, showing the Lord's supervision of his cause and of his servants. And when we remember that our God changes not, that he is the same yesterday, today and forever, it gives us assurance that he is still careful and interested as ever in his work, and in the affairs of all his servants. It gives us assurance that the harvest work in the end of this age is not going haphazard, as it extends hither and thither from one to another, by letter, by tract, by book, by word, to the uttermost parts of the earth. What a comfort there is for the Lord's people in this! How completely overwhelmed we would be if we were to lose sight of this fact, and feel the weight and burden of the

responsibility of the work pressing us down! In proportion as we are able to exercise faith, trust in the Lord in regard to the work, in that same proportion are we enabled to joy in the Lord and to possess the peace of God which passeth all understanding; – and to have it ruling in our hearts, controlling our lives and keeping us balanced, not only regarding the things of this present time, but also concerning the glorious outcome, – things to come.

This faith is largely a matter of education, too; for instance, as we observe the Lord's providential care, as taught us in this lesson and other lessons from his Word, we are more and more enabled to apply the same care and the same promises to ourselves. Nothing will calm our fears more than this, and enable us to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and in our confidence that he will ultimately bring off his work victorious. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Lord, increase our faith." The Apostle's confidence in the Lord's supervision of his work enabled him to read the lessons of his time, and to act accordingly with full faith respecting the results. The Lord could have directed him otherwise, and could direct us also otherwise than as he does – could speak to us audibly, if he chose. We are, therefore, to presume that it is for some wise purpose as concerns the development of our faith that he requires his followers to walk by faith, – not by sight and sound.

As soon as the Lord's guidance was recognized no time was lost, and matters in general seemed to co-operate for the journey of the missionaries into Macedonia. They went direct to Philippi, the principal city in that vicinity. Apparently they found no Jewish synagogue there, but outside the place they found a spot on the river bank where services were customarily held. This place is supposed to have been a temporary shed, such as, it would appear, was not unusual where the numbers were insufficient to erect a synagogue. It is possible, too, that this city, being directly under the Roman government, prohibited synagogues within its walls.

We note the course of the apostles here, in the presentation of the gospel. They did not go to the chief magistrates of the city, and say, Please direct us to your most degraded population, the wickedest people you have in this city, for we wish to preach the gospel to them and reform them. On the contrary, they evidently made inquiries respecting people who already knew God, and reverenced and worshiped him; and however small their number and unimposing their meeting place, thither the Apostle and his companions went. He knew, as many at the present time seem not to know, that God's work now is not that of reforming the world, is not a "slum work," but a seeking and gathering of the "jewels;" – a mission for those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness; – a hunt for those whose hearts are tender and broken, and therefore ready for the balm of Gilead, the gospel message of redemption and deliverance from sin and its penalty. Whatever others may do, let us follow the Scriptural precedents – let us be laborers together with God in his work; the results will justify this course, when this age shall have fully ended, and the things now hidden to so many shall be revealed, and they shall learn that God's ways were not their ways, nor his plans their plans, but that his were higher, broader, grander, as the heavens are higher than the earth – that his time for the reformation of the world is future, and that the present is his time for selecting the Kingdom class which shall bring about this reformation.

The text of the Apostle's discourse is not given. We know, nevertheless, quite distinctly what his message was. He had only the one message; viz., that God's promises made to Abraham were beginning to be fulfilled; that Messiah had come and had paid the ransom-price for the world, as its sin-offering, and that now forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and a privilege of joint-heirship in the Kingdom, was being offered, "to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile;" – and that whosoever accepted

the call in honesty of heart, and was faithful to it, would have not only the joy and peace of the Lord's spirit and blessing in the present time, but also a share in the glory to follow by and by.

In the audience was a woman from Thyatira, of the very district (Asia Minor) into which the Apostle was not permitted to enter and preach. She was in Philippi, probably temporarily, engaged in merchandising – a seller of purple – perhaps of purple dyes, or possibly of purple-dyed cloth. Dyeing and dyes had not reached present development, and the processes were generally secret, and profitable to those who understood them. It is presumed, therefore, that Lydia was well to do in this world's goods, as well as rich toward God in faith. Like the Apostle, she had sought out the place of prayer, and now the Lord had rewarded her and answered her prayers by sending her the truth for which she had been hungering and thirsting. She and some of her household believed, and were promptly baptized in confession of their faith; – possibly on this very Sabbath day in which she first heard.

Where the heart is in a condition of readiness, obedience does not need to be delayed, nor does it require long to decide to be on the Lord's side, and to be obedient to the voice of the good message which he sends us. This attitude of Lydia's heart is noted in the lesson, in the words, "whose heart the Lord had opened." We are not to suppose a miracle wrought in her case, to open her heart to the truth; we are rather to suppose that it was in her case as it is in the case of all the Lord's people; that none are ready for the truth unless the Lord has prepared their hearts. And O, how much this preparation of heart means! – often trials, disappointments, difficulties, etc. – the processes by which the Lord breaks up and mellows and makes the soil of our hearts fit for the receiving of his truth and grace. No doubt Lydia, after receiving the truth, looked back at past experiences, severe ordeals, etc., and could praise God for the leadings of his providence by which her heart had been "broken" and humbled and made ready for the seed of truth – ready to appreciate, not only the good things which God hath in reservation for them that love him, but ready also to appreciate his promised watch-care in their affairs in the present time, guaranteed to work out blessings to those who abide in his love.

Having received the truth, and some of its joy, Lydia not only confessed the Lord, but sought means to serve him. She could not join the Apostle's company as an evangelist of the good tidings, but she could entertain and serve Paul and his associates, and did so. No doubt she received more than compensation for the expense and trouble, in spiritual riches and refreshment; – but nothing in the narrative implies that even this laudable selfishness actuated her. Apparently her sole desire was to serve the Lord, and she saw the opportunity for this in rendering service to his representatives. She esteemed it a privilege, and so expressed herself, saying, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide."

When we remember the Master's own words, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me," we can see that Lydia took no extreme view of her privilege and opportunity in connection with this service. Her whole question was whether the Apostle and his companions would honor her dwelling with their presence. The same principle is true and applicable today, and conduct similar to that of Lydia is always to be considered a favorable sign indicating deep love for the Lord and for the good tidings. The messengers of the good tidings must necessarily always be associated in our minds with the message which they bear, and the great King whom they represent.

Our Golden Text calls for just a word of comment. It represents the Lord's message to Paul. It can be understood only when we remember that up to that time God's message

was not sent to all men, nor to all nations, but merely to the men of one nation, the Jews. Henceforth it was open to all; – to be delivered to all, as they might have ears to hear it. This explanation will be found a key also for various other Scriptures, referring to all people, all nations, and the preaching of the Gospel to them during the present age. It is to and for as many as "have an ear to hear" – we are to let such hear. Tho these will in all be but a "little flock;" yet it is the Father's good pleasure to give to this little flock the Kingdom under which all the families of the earth shall be blessed and brought to an accurate knowledge of the truth. – Luke 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:4, **Diaglott**.

Paul preaches to Lydia

EARLY MISSIONS AND PRESENT ONES – R. 4468

"So Mightily Grew the Word of God and Prevailed." – Acts 16:20

AT FIRST it may strike some minds as peculiarly out of order that we should institute a comparison between missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul and Pilgrim-missionary work at the present time in which we are privileged to engage. Nevertheless we see many strong resemblances.

(1) St. Paul's labors were during the Harvest time of the Jewish Age. The mission was to the Jew first. The converts were largely from amongst them. Secondarily he told the good tidings of the Kingdom to the Gentiles. We are in the Harvest time of the Gospel Age. We preach the harvest message of this dispensation to those who are professedly God's people, not with the expectation of bringing all Christian people to see the glorious features of the Divine Plan, but with the hope of finding amongst them such as have the hearing ear and of interesting them and ripening them for the garner. We, likewise, go outside of nominal Spiritual Israel to the Gentiles, to the worldly, when our message to Christians fails to bring results.

(2) Now, as eighteen centuries ago, the laborers in the Harvest field, whether as Colporteurs or Volunteers, go forth bearing the precious seed of Truth, the Gospel of the Kingdom, for those who have the ears to hear. A few in every place may be found. In some places the results are tongue-lashings and exclusions, ostracism and scorn. In other quarters the message is more favorably received. Evidently now, as then, all who are anxious to serve the Truth find opportunity to suffer for the Truth's sake, for righteousness' sake. Now, as then, all the dear laborers in the harvest field may note the Lord's providential care over them and his direction in the interests of the harvest work. Now, as then, we have much to encourage, as well as to discourage. Now, as then, there are surprises to the Lord's people in respect to where the Truth will be received and where it will be rejected. For instance, we have good word of the progress of the light in "darkest Africa," while frequently we have evidences that some of the scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law of our day are not worthy of Present

Truth. Now, as then, the Lord's providences seem to tell us that bonds and imprisonments and difficulties await us, if we continue active, faithful, zealous; but now, as then, the faithful of the Lord's people are not deterred by these experiences, but, with the Apostle, say, "We are willing, not only to be bound, but to suffer death for Christ's sake."

Our Golden Text seems likely to have a partial fulfilment in a parallel way very soon. The message is gathering impetus day by day. Although opposed by various blinded ones in Babylon and by false brethren from our midst and by ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing with back-biting tactics and midnight howls, nevertheless the Truth is prospering.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the Truth will soon, or ever, become popular while the Prince of this world is free to oppose it and to stir up bitter envyings and strife against it and to blind the minds of so many.

The lesson for us is, Faithfully onward, Christian soldiers, battling for the Lord, for the Truth, for the brethren – against sin and selfishness!

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION – R. 3122

ACTS 16:22-34

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

THE International Lessons change with the New Year from the Old Testament to the New, taking up the theme where we left it six months ago. That series of lessons noted **(1)** Christ as the central figure of Christianity; **(2)** the Holy Spirit as the motive power of Christianity; **(3)** the gradual development of the Church from its birth at Pentecost; **(4)** missionary work by Paul and Barnabas; **(5)** Paul's second missionary tour, with Silas and others as his companions, and by them the first entrance of the Gospel into Europe. We now take up the subject at this point. The first city in Macedonia – the first city, therefore, in Europe – to hear the Gospel message, was Philippi. One of the Apostle Paul's epistles, addressed to the church there established, is known to us as the "Epistle to the Philippians." At Philippi the Apostle and his companions, in seeking for those who reverenced the Lord, and hence most likely to have hearing ears for the Gospel, found a little group who met by the riverside for worship. Lydia, one of the number, became prominent for her thorough acceptance of the Gospel message, and her zeal in entertaining the Apostle and his company, and in forwarding, as best she could, the interests of the cause. The meetings were held outside the city, doubtless, on a similar pretext to that which, until recent years, excluded the worship of Protestants in the city of Rome, compelling them to go outside the city if they would hold any gatherings for worship. Philippi had its approved religious system, and would grant liberty for meetings to no other.

It was while the apostles were day by day passing from Lydia's home to the place of worship outside the city gate that they were met repeatedly by a young woman known in that city as a Pythoness, or Sybil (a sooth-sayer or truth-teller or fortune-teller; a foreteller of future events, or prophetess). She was evidently well known to all the people, and the exercise of her profession brought large income to a joint-stock company which owned her as its slave. As the evangelists passed daily she called out after them, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." These words, though true enough, coming

from such a source, and possibly in a jesting voice, might be understood by those who heard them to be sarcasm, ridicule, and, therefore, a hindrance to the Lord's work; or even if uttered in serious tones their coming from such an unsanctified quarter would probably preclude their having any favorable influence with those of such cast of mind and heart as might otherwise have a hearing ear for the Gospel of Christ. This continued many days, the Apostle gradually becoming more and more grieved by it – probably because it was hindering his mission, and perhaps, also, because he was grieved to see a fellow-creature thus made a tool of by the fallen angels, the wicked spirits which controlled her. Similarly our Lord refused to recognize the testimony of the evil spirit who acknowledged him, saying, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God," and had compassion upon the one who had the evil spirit, and delivered him. – Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34.

Present-day higher critics and lower critics are disposed to dispute that there are evil spirits, and that human beings ever are or ever were possessed by demons. Such incline to suppose that either deception or insanity was mistaken by the Lord and the apostles in these cases of obsession. However, to those who have learned to respect the Word of God there is no room for questioning the accounts. Our Lord commanded evil spirits to come out of possessed ones, and they obeyed him; and in this case the Apostle Paul invoked the same divine power for the healing of this young woman – for her deliverance from the evil spirit being which had obtained possession of her and made her its slave, speaking through her, and otherwise using her mouth, ears, etc., as channels of communication. These fallen angels adapt themselves to the varying conditions of humanity in all parts of the world, and in connection with all the various systems of religion, all of which we may properly accredit, more or less directly, to the great Adversary of the truth, who worketh by and through those who will submit themselves.*

* See *What Say the Scriptures About Spirtualism? Proofs That It Is Demonism*

As this young woman was a money-winner for the people who owned her, we can imagine what consternation was aroused amongst them when they found that not only was their source of gain for the future gone, but also that the large amount of money invested in this slave was lost (for such spirit-possessed ones had a high market value): they became desperately angry. Nothing will so greatly move men as love or selfishness; and under present conditions selfishness moves the vast majority, and with intense power. They had no hope of getting the evil spirit back into the woman; they must have revenge upon those who had financially ruined them. There is much of this spirit abroad in the world today: so long as the truth and the Lord's servants quietly go their way the world will generally be too busy with its affairs to molest them; but so soon as they perceive that truth and righteousness are inimical to their earthly interests and prospects their opposition becomes intense. Nor should we consider it to be the chief business of the Lord's people to stir up the animosity of the world and to bring persecution upon themselves. As a rule it is best that we leave the world to watch its own affairs, while we preach the Gospel, not using it as a sledge-hammer, to break men's hearts, but as the message of peace and love and blessing and joy to those whose hearts under divine providence have been already broken; and who have ears to hear the message of the grace of God. Very generally the apostles pursued as smooth a course as principle would permit, and in this instance very evidently Paul acted under special guidance of the Lord. The Apostle's general instruction is, "So far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" – do not go out of your way to stir up trouble, but if the Lord in his providence allows it to arise, be courageous and full of faith in him who has permitted it, that he will overrule it for good.

The owners of the Pythoness evidently had influence, and succeeded quickly in arousing a mob determined to have revenge against Paul and Silas. Of course they did not attempt this by telling the truth. They did not say, We were

using a poor slave girl, possessed of an evil spirit, for our financial profit, and these men have restored her mind, her will – released her from mental enslavement to saneness of mind. No; like all who are engaged in a bad cause, they ignored the truth of the matter, and raised spurious charges – that the prisoners were teaching a religion contrary to the laws of Rome, and likely thus to raise sedition. We see that this was contrary to the truth, for the Lord's servants went, according to law, outside the city gates for their worship. However, under the circumstances the false charge, without proofs, was sufficient to bring down upon the Lord's representatives the severest penalties their judges could inflict: their clothing was torn from them, and the command was given that they should be beaten with rods and imprisoned. The customary sentence of the time was, "Go, victors! Tear off their garments! Scourge them!" This was one of the three times Paul was thus beaten. (2 Cor. 11:25.) He referred to it in his letter to the Thessalonians, declaring that he was "shamefully" treated at Philippi. – 1 Thess. 2:2.

The prison was constructed with outer cells, which were more or less accessible to the light and air, and with an inner or central dungeon for the most vicious criminals. It was into the latter that Paul and Silas were thrust, and their feet made fast in the stocks, which often were so constructed as to separate the limbs widely and to make any movement very painful. It was under these unfavorable circumstances, with their backs bleeding and raw from the scourging, that reflecting upon the wonders of the divine plan, and their own association with that plan, these faithful brethren were so filled with the spirit of rejoicing that they gave vent to their feelings in hymn-prayers of thankfulness for their privilege of suffering in connection with the Lord's service, of enduring tribulation for righteousness' sake.

How remarkable it must seem to the worldly, who have never tasted of the joys of the Lord, that these men could thus rejoice in tribulation – rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer afflictions for the cause of Christ! How little the world knows of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, that rules in the hearts of the Lord's people who have grown in his grace and heart-likeness! How little can they appreciate the fact expressed by our Lord when he said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And again, through the Apostle, "We glory in tribulation, also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." (John 14:27; Rom. 5:3-5.) And as these faithful servants of the Lord could rejoice in whatever experiences God permitted to come to them in the discharge of duty, so may we remember that ours is the same God, that he changes not; that he is equally able and equally willing today to grant

Paul and Silas imprisoned

the sunshine of his favor to those who trust him and seek to walk in his ways. It is the reverse condition that the followers of Christ need to dread, need to fear, as expressed by the poet,

"Oh, let no earthborn cloud arise
To hide thee from thy servant's eyes!"

In a general sense, the entire Gospel age is represented as being a night, in which sin and distress prevail, and, as the Prophet has declared, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" – when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams, to scatter all the miasm of sin and death! But even in this night-time the Lord's people do not need to sorrow as others, who have no hope. On the contrary, to his people, "He giveth songs in the night." (Job 35:10.) While they are watching, hoping, praying, for the glorious morning of deliverance, their trust in the Lord is as an anchor to their souls within the vail. How could such children of the great King go mourning all their days? Surely especially now, as the Millennial morning is dawning, we can say, "He hath put a new song into our mouths, even the loving kindness of our God!" He has given his people the blessed privilege of singing the new song of Moses and the Lamb, that others cannot sing – at least not yet. These who sing and make melody in their hearts unto the Lord will surely also show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light – theirs will be the psalm of life, manifesting in looks and words and tones and sentiments the love of God received into good and honest hearts.

Since as Christians we have learned that it is our privilege to be always rejoicing – to rejoice evermore and in everything give thanks – we need not, like the world, wait for special manifestations of divine favor to call forth our praise, our homage of heart and our grateful obedience to the Lord. Rather, learning that divine providence is in all of our affairs, ready to shape them for our good, we may rejoice "whatever lot we see, since 'tis God's hand that leadeth us." Some one has well said: –

"If we are not ready to praise God where we are, and with our conditions and circumstances as they are, we should not be likely to praise him if we were differently circumstanced and our conditions just that which now seems to us most desirable. Daniel could sleep better in the den of lions than Darius in the royal palace; he who could not find rest in a lion's den, when ***that*** was the place for him, could not gain rest by a mere removal to a palace. It is the man's self which must be changed, not his circumstances or his possessions, in order to his having a heart overflowing with joy and praise."

When, in 1695, Madame Guyon was imprisoned in the Castle of Vincennes, she sang praises to the Lord, composing one of her own hymns, as follows:

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields and air;
And in my songs I sit and sing
To him who placed me there:
Well pleased a prisoner thus to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth thee.

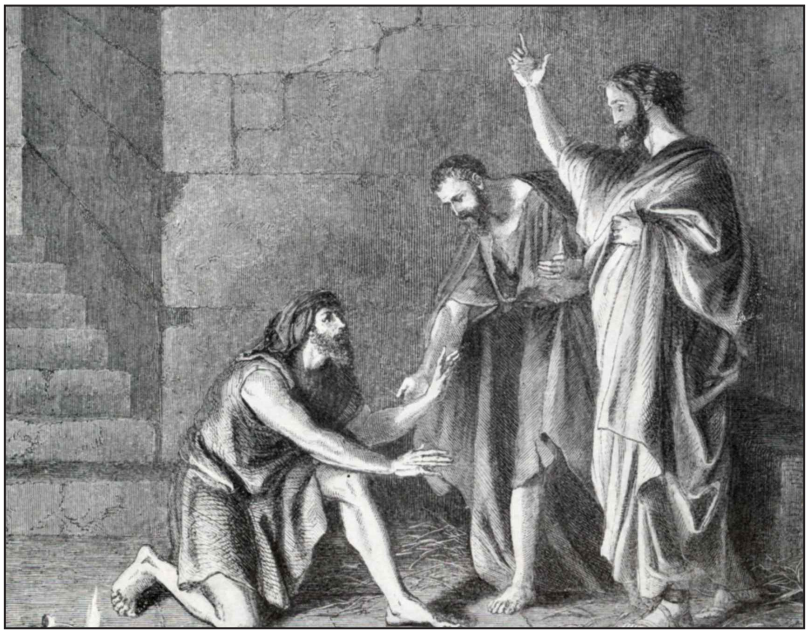
"My cage confines me round,
Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty;
My prison walls can not control
The flight, the freedom, of the soul."

The shaking of the prison, the loosing of the chains, the opening of the doors, the waking of the jailer, his dismay and intended suicide, fearing the ignominy which would attach to him from the escape of the prisoners, Paul's call to him to do himself no harm, assuring him that the prisoners were all safe, constitute together a thrilling episode, more remarkable to the jailer than to anyone else. Doubtless he had heard something respecting these men, so different from the ordinary criminals with which he had to do. Doubtless, he had been

impressed with their unresisting attitude; their Christlike demeanor even under severe provocation; their moderate submission even to their severe treatment at his hands. In any event he seems to have felt a heart-hunger for fellowship with his Creator such as these discredited men under his care enjoyed. Quite probably he had already been reading the Gospel of Christ in the features and conduct of his prisoners, whose living epistles were always open to be known and read by those about them. Had there not been some such preliminary instruction of his heart, we can scarcely suppose that he would so quickly have resolved to walk in the footsteps of the prisoners – that their God should be his God, and their salvation which was able to make them joyful in tribulation, should, if possible, be his salvation. And this was his inquiry: "What must I do to be saved?" – saved from sin, saved from its penalty, – death, saved from its degrading influence, saved from its unrest of heart and mind, saved to the same peace and joy and comfort and consolation which his prisoners exemplified.

We are not surprised at the reply given by the Lord's servants; we are not surprised that they did not say, Go to the confessional, get the priest to sprinkle holy water upon you, pay him to say masses for your sins, and join the Catholic Church. Neither are we surprised that the message was not that he must feel his guilt a long while, and pray to the Lord a good while, and seek forgiveness at a mourner's bench night after night, and join a Methodist or Presbyterian or other human system. How evident it is that these servants of the true Gospel and builders of the true Church were not Catholics, nor Presbyterians, nor Methodists; and that they neither founded these sects nor taught along their lines; and that they would no more affiliate with or encourage their methods today than they would then have done.

The answer to the jailer is one which commends itself to the Christian mind as being the proper one – no more, no less: he should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as his Redeemer, as the one who had died on his behalf, through whose stripes he might be healed, saved and through whose sacrifice he might rejoice in at-one-ment with God; and having thus believed with all his heart, whether it required a moment or an hour to explain and to understand these simple first principles of the Gospel, his next step was to consecrate himself, to be baptized into death with his Redeemer, and to symbolize this consecration



The Philippian Jailer

29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.
30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Acts 16:29-32

into death by a baptism in water. And he was encouraged to hope, not only for his personal salvation, but that his family might be sharers with him. We may reasonably suppose that this conversation about his salvation progressed while he was ministering to the evangelists – washing their wounds, seeking to make them comfortable and providing them food. We may also reasonably suppose that with many more words than are here presented the Apostle set before the jailer and his assembled family the simple story of the love of God manifested in the gift of his Son; and of the love of Christ manifested in his sacrifice on our behalf; and the evidence of the acceptableness of that sacrifice, as testified to by our Lord's resurrection and by his sending of the holy spirit upon the infant Church; and the subsequent message now going forth to whomsoever had an ear to hear, that there is salvation in him and in no other.

There is a lesson here for us in regard to the promulgation of God's message. We are not to use words of man's wisdom; not to attempt to philosophize and to show our learning; nor are we to say, Now, do not be in too much haste; there is plenty of time, and after we are comfortably fixed we will have all day tomorrow to talk this matter over. We are to remember the declaration of the wise man, "A word in season, how good it is!" We are to remember, when talking with those who have an ear to hear and are inquiring the way to the Lord, that there are great crises in the lives of men, momentous occasions, in which one word may be more valuable, more potent, than would be a hundred words or a thousand words at another time, under different circumstances; and we are to be instant in the Lord's service, whether seasonable or unseasonable to ourselves, – gladly ready to lay down our lives for the brethren. The disposition of Paul and Silas to preach Christ to the jailer regardless of their own convenience and comfort and need of rest was in perfect accord with the joy of the Lord which filled their hearts and led them to sing. Dissatisfied Christians, disposed to grumble, would be inclined neither to sing praises under such circumstances, nor to preach the Gospel to a poor inquiring fellow on so out-of-season an occasion. We are to distinguish, however, between out-of-season to ourselves and out-of-season to others; and to be willing to serve others at any time, however out-of-season to ourselves, if it be in season and opportune for them. We are not to intrude even the Gospel itself at inopportune times, however convenient the occasion may be to ourselves.

Let us learn from this brief statement of the Gospel discourse by the Apostle the wisdom of simplicity and directness. The Apostle might have preached a great deal about the Jewish Law, and about the Jewish failure to keep the Law. He might have discussed the various philosophies of the false religions; and all of these might be proper at the right time, but now was not the time suited for these, and hence he confined his remarks particularly to the general statement that Christ was the Messiah, that he had redeemed the world, that he must be laid hold on by faith, and that to all who thus took hold on him he became the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The next morning the rulers, learning something of the circumstances of the night, ordered the release of Paul and Silas; but the Apostle sought to forward the interests of the cause he served by returning word that he was a Roman citizen, and that Roman law had been violated in three particulars in his case: **(1)** That they had "beaten" him; **(2)** that this had been done "publicly;" **(3)** that it was specially reprehensible in that he had not been legally "condemned."

These charges against the rulers might have gone hard with them; hence, it is not to be wondered at that they came to the prison, as the Apostle requested, and brought their prisoners forth publicly, thus giving evidence to the people that they conceded that an injustice had been done them on the previous night. It was agreed that the Lord's representatives should leave the place, and

evidently this was as wise a thing as could have been done, at the time, for the publicity given to the Apostles and their teaching would now have opportunity to work, and the new disciples might have a better chance for presenting the truth quietly, in the absence of their leaders, against whom strong enmity had been aroused on account of the healing of the woman. From here the servants of the Lord went to Thessalonica, and undaunted by their experiences (indeed, rejoicing in them) they boldly spoke the word of grace to such as would hear them there.

"Many men of many minds," writes the poet; hence it is not surprising that some with too little reverence and too much self-consciousness are disposed to criticize the Apostle's course in claiming Roman citizenship here and on another occasion. We should approach such criticism from the standpoint of reverence, recognizing the apostles as specially chosen and specially inspired of the Lord and specially guided of him and fit to be our exemplars in all matters (Matt. 18:18) unless (as in Gal. 2:11) the criticism of their conduct or words is found in the Scriptures themselves. Unquestionably it was proper for the Apostle to appeal to his Roman citizenship as a means to secure ***justice***, not injustice.

Similarly we may properly appeal to every item of the human laws under which we may be living that would protect us in our just rights; but we may not go beyond this and denounce the laws or violate them. Our Lord's admonition was in line with such submission to the ordinances or ***laws*** of men, in respect to our earthly affairs; and he explains, – If any man ***sue thee at the law*** and take away thy coat resist not, but even let him take thy cloak also. If, however, any man attempts to rob us of our coat without due process of law we are not bound to yield except it seem to be the better policy. In all civilized lands we would have the right to call on the ***law*** to protect us from violence.

Such a course would not mean an acknowledgment that we are citizens of this world and renouncers of our heavenly citizenship – even as the Apostle's course did not mean this. It would mean merely that as strangers and pilgrims, we are required to pay taxes for the support of law and order, and that worldly people recognize our rights to certain protection in the laws which ***they framed***.

Similarly the Apostle at times referred to himself as a Jew – not as denying his Christianity, but as one now might say, – I am a German, or an American, thus to appeal not to a religious prejudice, but to a national sympathy, which, if men's hearts were right, would not need to be appealed to, because it would be quite sufficient to say, – I am a fellow ***man***. The Apostle on one occasion, perceiving that his enemies were chiefly Pharisees, cried out, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee! For the hope of the resurrection I am called in question!" To imagine a similar case now, suppose that Christians were practically of two parties, one professing faith in the resurrection of the dead, and the other denying a resurrection and future life; suppose the latter were called "Evolutionists," and the former "the Faithful," and that some of us were misunderstood and caught by a mob, and that we perceived that a goodly number of our assailants were of "the Faithfuls," and that we were to cry out, "I am one of the 'Faithful' and the son of a 'Faithful!' It is because I believe in the resurrection of the dead that I am now being molested!" Surely there would be nothing amiss in such a position. And this was exactly Paul's case; – the name Pharisee stood for faith in God and in a future life by a resurrection and for obedience to the Law and, in general, full loyalty to God. The word Pharisee signifies – wholly separated to God; and only that the word has since come to be proverbial for hypocrite any of the Lord's people could still say, I am a Pharisee – I am one of those ***wholly separated to God***.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? – R. 4406

ACTS 16:16-40

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

PAUL AND SILAS, bruised and doubtless bleeding from the cruel beating they had received at the command of the rulers of Philippi, were enabled to praise God in the prison, notwithstanding the fact that it must have been, like other prisons of that time, a most unhealthful and disagreeable dungeon. That night they sang praises to God. The other prisoners listening must have been surprised, it probably being the first time hymns to God had ever risen from that prison. If any other songs at all had ever echoed from its walls they were probably ribald, and inspired by alcoholic spirits. It is indeed remarkable that practically none but the Christian religion possesses a hymnology. Buddhists have none; the Mohammedans have none; the Confucians have none, and these three represent more than one-half of the world's population. Indeed, there seems to be nothing happifying or consoling in any religion except that of the Bible. The Bible alone teaches the love of God, his care over his consecrated saints and his provision for their change to glory, honor and immortality – yea, for the awakening of all the families of the earth and the bringing of all to a knowledge of the grace of God and to opportunities for life eternal.

We can readily see that nothing less than a strong, living faith in God enabled those two missionaries to feel that their adversities endured for the sake of the Gospel meant to them Divine approval, if rightly received. It was because they realized that their trying experiences were but "light afflictions" which, under Divine providence, would work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory – only this enabled these distressed men to triumph in their hour of distress and to praise God for the privilege of suffering as ***members*** of the Body of Christ, filling up a share of the sufferings of Christ that by and by they might also share his glory as members of his Body – members of the great antitypical Moses, the Mediator of the New Covenant. – Acts 3:23.

These things are written for our instruction, that, beholding the faithfulness of others, we might be encouraged. Our Covenant is the same as theirs and theirs the same as the Lord's, for the sufferings of Christ are one, however varied in character, and the glories to follow will be one, although the sharers will differ as star differeth from star in glory. The greater the sufferings faithfully endured, uncomplainingly, rejoicingly, the greater will be the reward in the Kingdom of our Father and of our Lord.

A WELL-TIMED EARTHQUAKE

Whilst the missionaries were singing, an earthquake shock was experienced which jarred the walls and loosed the staples of the chains whereby they were bound, releasing also the bars wherewith their prison-doors were held in place. The jailor, finding the doors down and supposing that the prisoners had escaped, and knowing that he would be held responsible, drew his sword and was about to suicide, when St. Paul called to him and said: "Do thyself no harm. We are all here." By this time the jailer was fully convinced that the missionaries committed to his care were remarkable men – not ordinary criminals. Possibly, indeed, he had some knowledge of demonism and obsession and had heard that, by word of mouth, one of these men had spoiled a supposedly Divine "oracle," by exercising some superior power.

At all events the jailer was now ready to care for these prisoners and to hear the message of God's love. Presumably he first secured the prison, the while thinking over all these matters, and then brought the missionaries

into his own living quarters in the prison. He attended to their comfort and meantime heard from them something respecting their mission – respecting Jesus the Messiah and his death as the world's Redeemer. He was convicted of sin. He realized in a general way at least that all mankind are sinners, aliens, separated from God by wicked works. He longed for a realization of a forgiveness of his own sins and a reconciliation with his Creator. And these missionaries, above all others, could help him. Hence his inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" What must I do to come into relationship with God, that I, like you, might be able to realize his loving care in all of my affairs; that, like you, I might be able to glory in tribulation, and to realize that all things will work together for my good under Divine providence?

The answer came promptly: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Taking this as the text the missionaries explained to the jailer and his household some of the philosophy of the Divine Plan of Atonement, the death of Jesus, the just for the unjust, the blessing that, in due time, is to reach Adam and his race through the resurrection processes and the privilege now of hearing and accepting the Divine call to joint-heirship with Jesus as his "members" in the ***sufferings*** of this present time and the ***glory*** that shall follow.

The Truth-seed sank into good soil. Those present believed and gratefully accepted the privilege of discipleship – to suffer for Christ's sake. Forthwith they were baptised, thus symbolizing their death to the world and to sin and to self, and their desire to walk in newness of life as "***members***" of the Christ. Ah, how the missionaries must have realized that they were as much providentially directed to the jail (by the injustice of the magistrates) as they had been previously guided to Lydia and the riverside prayer meeting! Their faith was strengthened. They were willing to endure hardness with patience and joy for the sake of enjoying this great privilege of carrying the good tidings to others.

According to some standards it was now high time for these missionaries to strike for Five Thousand Dollars a year and a parsonage, and especially to strike against any further persecution or beatings and to tell the Lord that they had had enough along the lines of ***self-sacrificing***. But the effect was just the opposite. They were the more encouraged to go on, to endure still further sufferings. We must see to it that our experiences tally with those of Jesus and the apostles. We must not be looking for any other kind nor be satisfied unless we find opportunities for suffering for the Truth's sake. We may be assured that although times have changed in some respects our Lord was quite right when he declared, "Whosoever will live godly in this present time shall suffer persecution." It may be in his own home and family or in the Church or from the world; he will not escape if he is faithful. If, therefore, any of us is ***escaping*** persecutions he should feel fearful of his condition and make careful examination as to whether or not he is faithful to all the privileges and opportunities he can find. This does not mean that we should seek persecutions in the sense of doing foolish things or doing proper things in a foolish manner. But it does mean that we should not shrink the responsibility of proper conduct, because of fear of consequences. Fear is one of the most subtle foes of the "little flock." It should be offset by trust, faith in God.

PAUL AND SILAS SHARERS IN SUFFERINGS

The account tells us that St. Paul alone rebuked the evil spirit and thus he alone was responsible for the tumult. We can readily see how Silas might improperly have taken a course in opposition – might have publicly reprimanded St. Paul and partially, at least, have joined with the multitude and thus have escaped arrest and beating and imprisonment. Or if his disloyalty had been greater than this

he might have upbraided St. Paul and said, Why did you not mind your own business and let that young woman alone? She was commending us, not opposing us. We should have gone right along preaching the Gospel. You are always getting us into trouble. I intend to leave and to start on a more successful missionary tour of my own. Alas, we all know some who have just such a wrong spirit as would take such a wrong view of the situation. We are glad that it was not so with Silas – that he was a worthy companion to the noble Paul. He recognized the Lord's blessing upon the Apostle and that he was being specially used of the Lord and that whatever experiences came to them the Lord was able and willing to overrule for good. Thus Silas was privileged to share in the privileges of the beating, of the songs, of the conversion of the jailer. Surely it means a great deal and brings a great deal of blessing to have faith in the Lord and to be obedient to Divine providences and not too worldly-wise and cautious and self-seeking.

The Apostle mentions in Heb. 10:32 some who "endured a great fight of affliction," and some others who were merely their ***companions*** in the shame without experiencing the same losses. The Apostle points out that God appreciates faithfulness in either of these respects and will duly give a reward. Let us be ***faithful*** to the Lord, followers of his leading and sharers of his blessings.

"LET THEM COME AND FETCH US"

The magistrates evidently realized that they had no just cause against the missionaries. The beating and imprisoning of them was merely to satisfy the public clamor, just as when Pilate similarly commanded Jesus to be beaten, not as a satisfaction for justice, but to appease the anger of the multitude. But St. Paul had not been a lawyer for nothing. The night before he had probably attempted to tell the rulers that he and Silas were Roman citizens and had the right to demand a fair trial before having any kind of punishment, but probably the clamor of the people was so great that their protests were unheard. Now, however, the missionaries sent word to the magistrates that they were Roman citizens and had been unjustly dealt with and would have to be treated in such a manner as would show that they had done no wrong. This would avoid leaving a reproach upon the faith at Philippi. The public should not say to them, "Your teachers were tried and expelled from this city and forbidden to return." On the other hand, notice the spirit of compromise. The missionaries did not insist on going forth to preach in public and demand that they be given legal protection in the exercise of their liberties. On the contrary, they concluded they had accomplished all in their power and that God's providence was now directing them elsewhere. They acted upon Jesus' counsel, "If they persecute you in one city flee to another."

Thus a peaceful compromise was effected by which the magistrates were relieved from further difficulty and the missionaries were honorably led forth as men who had done nothing amiss, but who had concluded that in the interests of peace they would quit the city, although their rights as Roman citizens would have permitted them to remain. Some of the Lord's people make the mistake of not insisting sufficiently on their rights and others err in the opposite way of insisting too much for their earthly rights. Here in St. Paul's condition we find illustrated the proper course – "the spirit of a sound mind." He insisted on such of his rights as were reasonable and necessary for the cause, and he freely relinquished other rights in the interests of peace; in harmony with the Scriptures, "Seek peace and pursue it;" and again, in harmony with his own exhortation, "So far as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Before separating they returned to the home of Lydia and "met the brethren" and comforted them. What they said for the comfort of the brethren is not difficult to imagine. They surely recounted to them the joy they had experienced in suffering for Christ's sake and how the Lord overruled their trials and

difficulties, sufferings and imprisonment for good, in that thereby the jailer and his family were added to the number of brethren – "the Lord's jewels."

Whoever has read the New Testament properly has surely noticed the spirit of brotherhood therein recorded as prevalent amongst those accepted of the Lord as members of the household of faith. And whoever intelligently comes in contact with those who are now rejoicing in the Present Truth must surely note something of the same spirit of brotherhood, in a remarkable degree.

FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME!

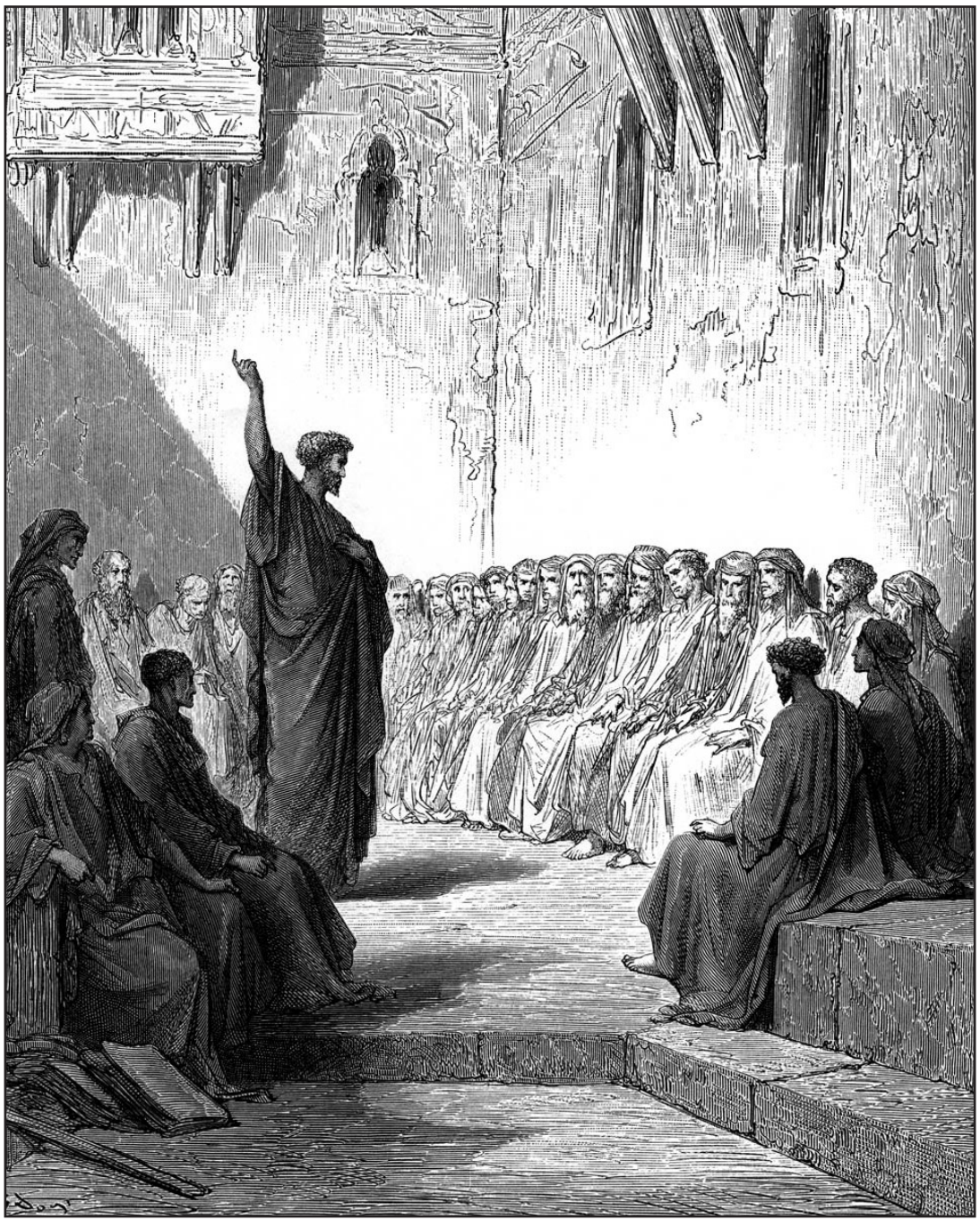
"Father, glorify thy name!"
Is my humble prayer;
Not because in all thy joys
I may have a share;
But because my love for thee
Has grown deeper, Lord,
I would have thy blessed name
By all hearts adored.

"Father, glorify thy name!"
Is my earnest prayer.
It may cost me keenest pain -
Yet, O Lord, I dare
To uplift this fervent plea,
And the answer claim:
Though it mean the cross for me,
Glorify thy name!

"Father, glorify thy name!"
Is my daily prayer.
All the loss my life may know
Thou wilt help me bear;
To thy will I say, Amen!
In thy love I trust:
Father, glorify thy name
Through unworthy dust!

"Father, glorify thy name!"
Is my constant prayer;
I have nought to dread or fear -
Thou hast all my care.
Death can be but gain for me,
E'en a death of shame:
Father, grant my humble prayer,
Glorify thy name!

– F. G. BURROUGHS



St. Paul Preaches to The Thessalonians, by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded, and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

Acts 17:2-4

TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN – R. 3130

ACTS 17:1-12

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet." – Psalm 119:105

WHEN released from the prison at Philippi, Paul, Silas and Timothy went about a hundred miles direct to Thessalonica, the largest commercial city of that district – Macedonia. Nothing daunted by their experience at Philippi, apparently not even waiting for their backs to thoroughly heal from the wounds there received, Paul at once began a vigorous presentation of the Gospel. As was his custom, he went first to the Jews. The propriety of this course is evident: the Jews were familiar with the prophecies of the Messiah, and although making their home amongst the Gentiles, nevertheless, as the Apostle declares, they were continually hoping for the fulfilment of the grand promises made to Abraham, confirmed unto Isaac and unto Jacob, and that by divine oath, or affirmation. – Acts 26:7.

Not only were the Jews, acquainted with the prophecies and looking for their fulfilment in a Messiah, better prepared than other peoples for the message of the Gospel, but, additionally, it was part of the divine will that the first offer of the Gospel should go to the Jew, the natural seed of Abraham, who was, by divine intention, to have the first opportunity of becoming a part of the spiritual seed. Furthermore, the Jewish synagogues were ostensibly conducted on a liberal plane, anyone of reasonable ability being free there to show what he could of the teaching of the Scriptures. Thus the Apostle met with the Jews on three Sabbath days; and, according to his own narrative, he labored with his hands for temporal necessities between times. (1 Thess. 2:9.) It was during this stay of probably three to six months that he twice received financial aid from the brethren at Philippi.

The result of his labors was the nucleus of a flourishing church, to which two of his epistles were addressed. The Apostle's attitude toward these brethren may reasonably be taken as the criterion of his general attitude toward all of the Lord's dear flock. He dealt not with them as a lord or master amongst slaves or subordinates; but, using his own words, he was gentle toward them, as a nursing mother to her children. (1 Thess. 2:7.) He admonished, comforted, instructed them, "as a father doth his children." (1 Thess. 2:11.) He lived an unblamable, unselfish life in their midst, giving them the Gospel, and with it his very life. – 1 Thess. 2:5-8,10.

The method of the Apostle's teaching is expressed in the statement that he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures," opening and showing forth "that it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead." The Greek word used signifies that the teaching was in the nature of a dialogue. He appealed to the Scriptures, offered explanations of their meaning, pointed out how this meaning found its fulfilment in the experience of our Lord, and heard and replied to queries and objections. Like other Jews, these had, of course, thought chiefly on the Scriptures which predict Messiah's glory and Kingdom, and the grandeur of the position of Israel as his people, dispensing blessing to all the families of the earth. The Apostle pointed out the other Scriptures which spoke of "the sufferings of Christ," and how it was necessary that he should redeem the world before he could properly deliver it from the power of sin and death. We may be sure that he had the prophetic statements well in mind, and also the various types of the law, and that these were called up in order before his hearers, and the evidences adduced that our Lord fulfilled these; and not only that his death was necessary, as typified in Isaac, but also his resurrection from the dead, that he might be the distributor of the mercies of God. The word "opening" carries with it the thought that these Scriptures had been closed previously,

and this is in harmony with the statement of Luke, when mentioning the Lord's discourse with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, it is declared that he "opened unto them the Scriptures," saying, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer." – Luke 24:26,46; 1 Pet. 1:11.

The work to be done today very closely resembles that which was done by the Apostle as here recorded. There is need for us to go with the "meat in due season," first of all to those who have already been the recipients of divine favors and great advantages every way, to open to them other Scriptures which are now due to be understood; – which show the grand purposes of our heavenly Father in connection with the blessing of all the families of the earth through the Church glorified; and that the glorified Church, under its glorified Head, Christ Jesus, is to constitute the Kingdom of heaven, the divine agency for the blessing of all. It is appropriate that we adopt largely the same plan that the Apostle did, and reason with people out of the Scriptures, opening them before their minds gradually, that they may catch some glimpses of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan. Nevertheless, we know that it will be now even as it was then – that only those who have "an ear to hear" will hear, and that the others will be stirred up to antagonism, bitter envyings, jealousies, etc.

The Apostle's work was evidently well done, his arguments effective – the result was that some of them (Jews) were persuaded and took sides with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks quite a good many, – who had been feeling after God and who probably had realized that there was more true religion with the Jew than elsewhere, – were now, because of having less Jewish prejudice, more ready than their Jewish friends to hear and appreciate the Gospel of Christ. Of the chief women of the city, too, quite a number were influenced by the message, and became followers of Christ.

Christian people in all denominations today are claiming great liberty – that they are not sectarian, and that all who love the Lord have fullest opportunity to worship with them. But we find that if we take them at their word and attempt to reason with them out of the Scriptures respecting the things now due to be understood, pointing out that we are in the dawn of restitution times, that the Millennial Kingdom is about to be ushered in, and that Christ is not only the Priest who redeemed his people with his blood, but is shortly to be the great Prophet and King who is to rule and instruct the whole world of mankind, the majority are unable to receive this – it is too contrary to their preconceived notions. Especially do the leading ones, the preachers and elders and Sunday School superintendents, feel that they must oppose the truth; that they must not admit that there are in the Word of God "things new and old – meat in due season for the household of faith." Their objections are often inspired by jealousy or envy, as they note that the message of grace appeals to the hearts of some of the very best of their number, and some of the very best outside their number – of the world.

None like to complain, after having boasted of Christian liberty and fellowship; – they murmur that our preaching of the good tidings of great joy is proselyting – "attempting to steal their members," etc. They exclaim, "Why do you not go to the slums, instead of coming in amongst us to steal away our best members, our ripest wheat?" We answer that a similar charge of proselyting might with equal force have been brought against our Lord Jesus and against the apostles. The Apostle, as we see, wherever he went, sought for the most religious and most intelligent people, instead of seeking for the most ignorant and the most degraded. Why? Because he well knew that the Gospel he had been sent to proclaim was not intended of the Lord to convert the world, but to ***gather out of the world*** a "little flock," a people for the Lord's name. (Acts 15:14.) He knew that the Gospel he had to preach would not appeal to the most degraded hoodlums of

society; on the contrary, it would appeal most to intelligent people, – and he presented it in as logical, reasonable and intelligent a manner as it could possibly be set forth. It is still proper for us to pursue the same course, and the conditions today of proclaiming the second presence of the Lord, and that the time is at hand for the establishment of the Kingdom and for the gathering of the elect wheat into the barn, can better be presented now to the intelligent, thoughtful, devout people in all the various sects, and of the world, than to others.

Evidently the discussions of those three Sabbath days were all that the Jews as a whole could endure; – apparently the ministers of the truth, thenceforth excluded, went to the house of a prominent believer, Jason, and from there continued their propaganda, – possibly holding meetings at his house. Meantime the opposing Jews at Thessalonica received information from their brethren, opponents of the truth at Philippi, respecting these servants of the Lord, and the message they carried; – and, doubtless, the Adversary persuaded them that they were engaged in a noble cause when they gathered a rabble of market-loungers, "roughs and toughs," to raise a commotion, and as a mob to make an assault upon Jason's house, to take the Apostle and his companions before the authorities and have their work stopped. So some of a similar class in spiritual Israel today feel toward the truth and its servants, if we may judge from the epithets sometimes used. The inciting of Sunday school scholars to tear up religious literature and throw the fragments at the distributors is about on a par with the conduct of those Jews of Thessalonica in inciting a mob – the difference between their day and ours of more general intelligence and better police regulations being taken into consideration. A disinterested spectator would be inclined to query – What can be the evil teachings of the WATCH TOWER publications, that would lead a professedly "liberal servant of God" today to feel such an animosity against them? We would only reply that we know of nothing contained in this literature that should arouse any but the warmest sentiments of love toward God and toward the brethren and toward the world in general. It might similarly be questioned in the minds of disinterested persons why reputable Jews and rabbis should incite a mob against the Apostle and his companions? and why the high-priest and Scribes and Pharisees incited the multitude against our Lord? Pilate, evidently was in this position when he inquired respecting our Lord, "Why, what evil hath he done?" It is because the Lord's message was one of grace and truth that he was hated and crucified. It was because the Apostles and their co-laborers were telling forth the same message of the grace of God in Christ and the blessings yet to come through them, that they were maligned and opposed; and it is the same Gospel, the same good tidings, the same joyful message, of which Christ is the center, the Kingdom and the blessings for all the world of mankind the circumference, that is hated and maligned today; – not by the world, but by those who professedly are God's people.

Not finding Paul and Silas, the mob dragged Jason and others of the believers before the rulers. The charges were very serious ones – inciting to anarchy and treason – turning the world upside down, and teaching that there is another king, Jesus, whose kingdom is to be universal in due time. While these charges were fraudulent as respects the true standpoint, they nevertheless had in them a sufficiency of truth to make them appear serious. It is true that the Gospel of Christ is revolutionary in its character; that whenever it enters the heart of a man it keeps turning things upside down continually, until it is either ejected or has produced a transformation of heart and life. There is no peace between right and wrong, or light and darkness, in any heart. Peace can be secured only by giving way either to the light or to the darkness; either to the truth or to the error; and since the error is the more popular, the more general, the majority choose peace along that line. The Lord's people, however, the sincere lovers of righteousness, can have

peace on no other terms than those of loyalty to the Lord and his Word, and the principles of his righteousness. The same is true in respect to all the affairs of the world. It is the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel which ***will be a Gospel of peace in due time***, that at the present time, because of evil and ignorance in the world, is setting on fire the very foundations of "the present evil world," and will ultimately result in the great figurative conflagration which shall consume this present order of things, political, financial, social, religious, – that upon the ruins of present institutions the Lord may shortly erect his Kingdom of righteousness – with peace upon proper foundations of justice and love.

We must not be surprised if this Gospel of peace has the same influence today as it had in the days of our Lord and of the apostles. Mark the effect of the precious message at Thessalonica and at Philippi and elsewhere. Mark the effect when the message was delivered from the lips of him who spake as never man spake, and of whose wonderful words it is recorded that "all the people bare him record and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Nevertheless, however graciously stated, the truth is a sword which penetrates in every direction, and which, as our Lord foretold, frequently sets parents against children and children against parents, because the darkness hateth the light and opposeth it in every possible manner.

The decrees of the emperors respecting riots and treason were very strict, and all rulers were held rigidly to account. Hence, when the charges were made of anarchy and treason, both the multitude and the rulers were "troubled;" the multitude, because more or less of a riot had occurred, seemingly because of treason; – and this might lead to the taking away of some of the city's privileges and liberties, its loss of commerce, etc. The rulers were troubled because they were in danger of being called to account unless they took active steps for the repression of anything resembling treason. They knew, nevertheless, that the charges were fabrications, and, hence, got out of the difficulty by placing Jason and his companions under bonds to keep the peace – to see that similar riots did not occur again. This necessitated the sending of Paul and Silas away as quietly and as quickly as possible.

It need not surprise us to have, at no distant day, charges of anarchy, etc., made against those who today are proclaiming present truth, the harvest message, the establishment of the Kingdom, etc. It might be claimed against us that we are not sufficiently in accord with Caesar's government, the kingdoms of this world; that we do not manifest sufficient interest in the elections, nor in the militia, etc.; and that our teaching that the Lord is about to establish his Kingdom, and that it will be set up at the expense of all present institutions, which will fall in a time of trouble and anarchy, implies sympathy with anarchy. The charges would be no more true in our case than in the case of the Lord and the apostles; nevertheless, it may be used as a powerful weapon some day, and if it is we must trust to the same God who guarded the interests of his cause then, and who is equally able to guard it now. We may be sure that the door of opportunity for proclaiming the good tidings will not close until the true "wheat" shall have been found, until the elect shall have heard the message that is now due, that they should come out of Babylon and be gathered to the Lord, instead of being bound to human institutions.

In view of the Lord's teaching regarding this subject, and of how the wisest presentation of it may be ultimately misconstrued, it behooves everyone who would serve the truth faithfully to be as careful as possible not to be misunderstood; – to let it be clearly understood that we neither participate in nor advocate anarchy of any kind; but, on the contrary, are standing for righteousness and the highest of all laws, the divine law; and that we believe that the poorest of laws are better than none, and that the anarchy

that will inevitably come upon the world, according to divine predictions, will be a great curse, a great disadvantage in many respects; and that the only reason why we are able to look upon it with any degree of complacency is because of the assurances given us in the Lord's Word that it will be speedily followed by the Kingdom of God's dear Son; – in power and authority, to fully control all the turbulent elements.

Leaving Timothy at Thessalonica, Paul and Silas journeyed about fifty miles to a rather obscure Grecian city, called Berea, and, according to their custom, realizing that the preaching of the Gospel of Christ was their chief business, they lost no time in engaging therein. Again they sought the Jews in the synagogue, and this time found some specially susceptible to the truth, referred to as "more noble than they of Thessalonica." The Greek word used here for "noble" seems to imply persons of noble birth, a higher and nobler class than those of the more commercial city. Nobility of character is favorable, wherever it is found, and from whatever cause, and true nobility implies reasonableness, as distinguished from prejudice. The Bereans were reasonable, professing to believe all that was written in the Law and the Prophets; to be looking for the Messiah; etc., and they welcomed the servants of God who sought to draw their attention particularly to the "things written aforetime." With all readiness of mind they began to examine the Scriptures, not merely on the Sabbath days, but daily, – to see how well the Apostle's arguments were supported by the testimony of the Law and the Prophets. As we should expect, many of so noble a class accepted the good tidings. Indeed, the wonder is that any person of noble and reasoning mind, once becoming acquainted with the glorious message of God's love and mercy in Christ – his plan for selecting the Church now, and by and by of blessing all the families of the earth through it – could disbelieve or could attribute such a Gospel to any human source. Surely its internal evidences are convincing that it is not of man nor by man, but of the Lord.

ST. PAUL AT THESSALONICA AND BEREA – R. 5913

ACTS 17:1-15

"Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior." – Acts 5:31

LEAVING Philippi, St. Paul, Silas and Timothy went about one hundred miles to the southwest and stopped at the city of Thessalonica, the largest commercial city of Macedonia – a city now known as Salonica. En route they passed two cities, where apparently they found no opening for their Message, no hearts prepared. Philippi was one of the few cities where the Gospel made any headway before the city had first come under the influence of Judaism to some extent. Evidently the scattering of the Jews throughout this region had more or less acquainted their neighbors with the true God, the observation of His Laws and respect for His revelations and for the promised Messiah. At Thessalonica the missionaries found a Jewish synagogue; and in harmony with their usual custom they attended worship there. For three Sabbath days they reasoned with the congregation from the Scriptures. The word rendered reasoned in Verse 2 implies a dialogue or discussion. St. Paul discussed the Bible with the Jews. The propriety of his course is evident. The Jews were familiar with the Messianic prophecies; and although making their home amongst the Gentiles, nevertheless, as the Apostle declares, they were continually hoping for the fulfilment of the grand promises made to Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and to Jacob – the Oath-bound

Covenant. – Acts 26:7; Hebrews 6:13-19.

This form of preaching the Gospel has fallen considerably into disuse amongst Christians. It is an excellent one. We have endeavored to revive it amongst the friends of Present Truth everywhere by especially commending to them the Berean Bible Studies and such discussions of the Word of God with the aid of helps. The effect is excellent. In this way many obtain clearer conceptions of the Truth than they would get from any ordinary discourse. While we commend any kind of Bible study, we especially commend this form which the Lord has blessed above all others for the enlightenment of His people in this end of the Gospel Age. This method is for the advantage of the entire class; for an able leader is not so indispensable as with other methods. One danger with able leaders is that sometimes their ability goes in a wrong direction and misleads the too confiding ones under their care.

For this kind of Bible study both a textbook and a question book are used. The textbooks are the STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. In these volumes the teachings of the Bible have been brought into an assimilable form. Each subject is treated systematically, with references to various parts of the Bible in which these subjects are stated. It does not surprise us, therefore, that those of God's people who have learned the value of this method of Bible study and who follow it have a clearer understanding of the Word than have others.

THE ESSENCE OF ST. PAUL'S TEACHING

After telling us that the Apostle reasoned with the Jews concerning the Gospel Message, our Study explains something of his method; namely, he opened the Scriptures to them, pointing out what they had not previously noted respecting Messiah – the fact that it was necessary for Christ to suffer death and to rise from the dead before He could be the King promised. The Jews knew of the Scriptures which referred to Messiah's sufferings. But these they ignored, and grasped only those which referred to His Millennial Reign of glory, honor and power.

What they needed was just what the Lord sent them in the Apostle – some one to explain the Scriptures, to answer their questions and to help them to find the answers to their own questions in the Scriptures. St. Paul showed them the connecting links between the two lines of prophecies pertaining to Messiah. He pointed out the fact that through the power of sin inbred, ingrained, death reigned over the human race, and that none could be released from this condition without a Redeemer. Messiah would indeed reign over His Kingdom, the world; but previously a redemption must take place, a lifting of the curse of death. Then he produced the facts of Jesus' death, "the Just for the unjust," and showed that our Lord's resurrection was exactly what had been declared by the Prophets, and was necessary for Him to carry out in due time the foretold blessing of Israel under their New Covenant and the blessing of the world through Israel. – Genesis 2:17; 3:19; 12:3; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Then the Apostle showed that first, however, an elect class must be gathered, to be associated with Messiah in His Kingdom; and that these must demonstrate their worthiness by laying down their lives in consecration in His service. The sum of the Apostle's argument was, "This Jesus whom I preach unto you is Messiah."

ITS EFFECT UPON THE HEARERS

Some of the Jews believed the Message and took sides with St. Paul and Silas; but evidently they were only a minority. With them were some devout Greeks and also a number of prominent women. The division time had come. The wheat amongst the Jews in Thessalonica must be separated from the chaff class, as elsewhere. (Matthew 3:11,12.) They were being gathered into the Gospel garner, into the Spirit Dispensation. They

were being transferred from Moses to Christ, from Natural Israel to the new Spiritual Israel, called to be a Royal Priesthood, a peculiar people, for a Divine purpose.

Only a minority of the Jews could receive this Message. The remainder were embittered. Therefore they became jealous of the success achieved by these strangers, who had been in the city but a few weeks, but who nevertheless had already made considerable impression upon Gentiles, whom they had been unable to influence and to convert to Judaism.

Having no truthful argument, no logic wherewith they could overcome the arguments of the missionaries, the unbelieving Jews resorted to Satan's usual tactics of misrepresentation, slander, thus arousing prejudice, hatred, malice, etc. They even incited an uproar in the city – a mob, which made an assault upon the house of Jason, with whom the missionaries were lodging. Not finding the missionaries, the mob, under leadership, took Jason and other believers before the magistrate, saying, "These that have turned the world upside down have come here also." Jason has received them, and is thus a participant in their wrong-doing. They are traitors to this government and the Emperor; they teach that there is another king – Jesus.

This was almost the exact charge brought against our Redeemer when He was brought to Pilate's judgment bar. And there is a measure of truth in it; for the Caesars claimed not only to be civil rulers of the world, but also to be the Pontifex Maximus, or chief religious ruler. While the Kingdom which Jesus and the Apostles preached is a Heavenly one, a spiritual one, nevertheless the Message includes the thought that in due time this Heavenly rule, or authority, would be extended to the affairs of earth, and Messiah's Kingdom would be worldwide – "under the whole heaven." – Daniel 7:27.

We can readily see that such a proclamation might be construed as treasonable from the world's standpoint. But surely the Jews had no excuse for using their influence along these lines; for they well knew that all the hopes and promises in which their nation rejoiced led up to just such a Kingdom hope. Nevertheless, their pride and hatred blinded them to the injustice of their course when they incited the heathen multitude. It should not surprise us at all if in the near future false Christians – Christians not in the proper attitude of heart to receive the Message of Present Truth – should similarly charge us with treason because we preach "the Kingdom of God's dear Son," about to be established in power and great glory, in the midst of a period of social distress and anarchy. Nor will it surprise us if these false Christians should be the very ones to incite the multitudes and the rulers against us.

"TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN"

The Jews realized that there was a conflict on between Judaism and Christianity; and that wherever the two came into contact there could be naught else than a clash, and one or the other be turned upside down. Similarly, some of those who are at present blinded to Present Truth rail at us in almost the same language. And the truthfulness of the assertions cannot be controverted. The Gospel of Christ created differences in the Jewish system then, as the Gospel Truth is doing now in Christendom. This is what our Lord Jesus foretold when He said, "Think not that I have come to send peace upon the earth. I have come to send a sword. . . . And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." – Matthew 10:34-36.

Our own experiences, like those of the Apostles, corroborate the truth of our Lord's statement. An irrepressible conflict is on. However, had the Jews but properly understood the matter, they need not have given themselves such concern. They might have known that comparatively few would accept the Message of the Gospel; and that the few going out from them would scarcely be missed.

And so it is today. Our dear friends in the

various denominations are fearful lest Present Truth capture their people by the wholesale. But they are mistaken. It will take only the Elect, and leave the remainder. The wheat are comparatively few in proportion to the tares; and only the wheat is being gathered. The tares must be left in the bundles – in sectarian bodies. They must not in any manner get in amongst the wheat ready for the garner. The separation of the wheat from the tares should not, and could not, take place in the past, but must and will take place now, in the Harvest of this Age.

Apparently this attack upon Jason and others was not permitted of the Lord until the work of propagation had been well accomplished, and until those who had an ear to hear had a good opportunity to hear the Message. The rulers of Thessalonica put Jason and the other believers under bonds, to guarantee against a certain forfeit of money or of property that these Christian missionaries should raise no further disturbance. As a result, St. Paul and Silas realized that their work at Thessalonica was at an end; and, that they might not jeopardize the interests of the Cause and of their friends by further public utterances, St. Paul agreed that they should leave the city quietly, secretly.

"THE MORE NOBLE BEREANS"

The next stopping place was Berea; and there, as usual, the missionaries went first to the synagogue. They were agreeably surprised to find the Jews at that place very honest-hearted. We read, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." The Greek word used here for "noble" seems to imply persons of noble birth, a higher and nobler class than those of the more commercial city. Nobility of character is favorable, wherever found and from whatever causes; and true nobility implies reasonableness, as distinguished from prejudice.

The Bereans were reasonable. Professing to believe all that was written in the Law and the Prophets, professing to be looking for the Messiah, they welcomed the servants of God who sought to draw their attention particularly to the "things written aforetime." With all readiness of mind they began to examine the Scriptures, not merely on the Sabbath, but daily, to see how well the Apostle's arguments were supported by the testimony of the Law and the Prophets. As we should expect, many of so noble a class accepted the Good Tidings. Indeed, the wonder is that any person of noble and reasoning mind, once becoming acquainted with the glorious Message of God's love and mercy through Christ – His Plan for selecting the Church now and of blessing all the families of the earth through that Church by and by – could disbelieve it or could attribute such a Gospel to any human source. Surely its internal evidences are convincing that it is not of man nor by man, but of the Lord!

We read that many of the noble Bereans believed – Jews and Greeks, men and women. Here is a suggestion to us all. We should have a judgment and conviction respecting the Divine Word; but it should not be so unreasonable a one as to hinder us from receiving further knowledge from the same source. We are to "try the spirits," the teachings, the doctrines. This does not signify, however, that we are to be "blown about by every wind of doctrine." We should know in whom we have believed; and having been once convinced, we should not be easily turned aside from a properly grounded faith.

If we are satisfied that we have been building upon the Rock Foundation furnished us in the Divine Revelation, we should expect that any further light coming to us would not be contradictory to what we have found to be Scriptural and harmonious with the Divine character. On the contrary, we should expect that all further light from the Divine Word would be consistent with the foundations of our faith. Anything that would set aside or make valueless the first principles of

the doctrines of Christ should be promptly rejected.

PERSECUTED IN EVERY CITY

If the missionaries of the Cross of Christ were vigilant and earnest, so were the servants of error. The Jews of Thessalonica learned that the missionaries were at Berea, and forthwith began to foment strife and to raise a disturbance amongst the people. The missionaries concluded that this was a sign that they should move forward.

Let us be on the alert to watch for the leadings of the Lord's providence; and while not fleeing persecution in the ordinary sense, let us be ready to move when persecution seems inevitable and when apparently it might be considered as an indication from the Lord that He had service for us in some other field of labor. Thus persecuted, St. Paul went to Athens; and later Silas and Timothy followed him thither.

WORSHIPING THE UNKNOWN GOD – R. 4409

ACTS 17:16-34

"God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
– John 4:24

ST. PAUL awaited the coming of Silas and Timothy at Athens, then the center of the world's culture, intelligence and worldly wisdom. Athens boasted that in one century of its intellectual dominance it had sent forth more intellectual giants into all the world than all the rest of the world had supplied for five centuries. Jerusalem had been the center of true religion, as Rome was the center of the world's imperial authority, and Athens was the world's intellectual capital. We can imagine St. Paul walking through the streets of that great city, admiring its architecture, the most wonderful of the world, listening to some of the scientific teachers of that day and noting the numerous monuments with which the city was fairly crowded. Pliny, the historian, notes the fact that about this time Athens contained more than three thousand public statues and a countless number of lesser images in private houses. Of these the majority were of gods, demigods and heroes. He notes the fact that in one street there stood before every house a square pillar carrying upon it the bust of the god Hermes. Every gateway and post carried its protecting god. Every street had its sanctuary.

No wonder we read that Paul's spirit was stirred within him as he beheld so intelligent a city wholly given over to idolatry, apparently utterly ignorant of the true God. The longing seized him to tell these worldly-wise men of the great Creator and his wisdom, justice, love and power. He found the Jewish synagogue as usual and there he reasoned with the Jews and with devout persons and in the market places he talked with all who were willing. Our translation says ***disputed***, but it is generally admitted that this word does not well represent the thought of the original, which rather signifies ***conversed*** or ***reasoned***. Disputes, in the ordinary sense of that word, are of little value, usually accomplishing little good.

Some called him a babbler, implying that there was neither reason nor sense in his presentation, but others thought more favorably and were curious to have a formal discourse. So in the Lord's providence the way was open for him to deliver a discourse on the Plan of the Ages amongst the wise men of the earth on Mars Hill, probably in the great structure known as the Parthenon. This must

have seemed a favorable opening to the Apostle to find intelligent people really inquiring respecting the Gospel he had to proclaim. However, the curiosity of the Athenians, like that of some of the worldly today, was superficial. They wished to keep abreast of every new theory, but particularly that they might the better defend their own position to which they were already committed.

YE ARE TOO RELIGIOUS

Our common version reports the Apostle to have begun his discourse by accusing his hearers of being too superstitious. However true the statement might have been it would have been an unwise one, as it would have prejudiced and offended his hearers from the outstart and needlessly. We do well, therefore, to translate the word too religious, instead of too superstitious. And this translation fits well with the discourse which followed. For the Apostle proceeds to show that by the images erected they recognized innumerable gods and that in addition he had seen one altar to the unknown God. This was being over-religious in one sense of the word – unwisely so. Reason should have taught them what Revelation teaches us, namely, that there is but one living and true God. The mind that roams about and grasps innumerable gods is truly over-religious and under-wise.

"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD"

The inscription on one of the altars, "To the unknown God," became the text of the Apostle's discourse. He preached the true God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. He showed Divine justice and its requirements, which we, as the fallen race of Adam, are unable to meet; that thus we are under condemnation and unworthy of eternal life. He showed that God so loved the world that he sent his Son to be our satisfaction price, to redeem us from the condemnation of death and to grant us resurrection privileges. He explained that this true God was neither stone nor wood, nor were there any such representations of him, but that, as our Golden Text declares, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in Truth." He drew their attention to a greater God than they had ever thought of. He showed the length and breadth of the Divine love – that it was not confined to one nation or people, but that God had made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined the appointed season in which they should come to a knowledge of himself, according to the place of their residence; because he desires that all should seek him and that feeling after him they should find him.

How true! The Lord has revealed himself to some of us and has drawn us to a knowledge of himself and to opportunities for still further knowledge and grace. Yet many are still in ignorance, his time or season for their being brought to a knowledge of the Truth having not yet fully developed. He is being found by those who desire to find him; those who are out of accord with sin; those who are feeling after God with a desire to find him. To this class alone does he appeal. How glad we are that, after having gathered the "elect" of this Gospel Age, he will ultimately cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess, and the knowledge of the Lord to fill the whole earth!

The Apostle, in speaking to philosophers, spoke from the standpoint of reason, instead of attempting to discuss the matter from the standpoint of Divine Revelation, as he would have done had he been speaking to a congregation of Jews or Christians. Thus to the barbarians and to the stoics of Athens, he became a philosopher that he might the better assist them to the true philosophy and the Plan of the Ages. For instance, had he been speaking to the Jews or Christians he might have noted the fact that all out of Christ are out of Divine favor and under Divine condemnation; but in addressing these philosophers he stated the truth from another standpoint. He called attention to the fact that in one sense of the word the entire human family are brethren

and all of them God's children, or offspring. Note the logic of the matter. If humanity be the offspring of God, as his children they should in some degree resemble him. And that being true the gold and silver and stone images must be very poor representations of the true God. Man himself, as the child or offspring of God, would better represent him, especially in the higher elements of his character.

"THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT"

Paul anticipated the question of his hearers – Why do you come around now to tell us of this God? If he is our Creator and we are his children why did he not long ago send us a message? And are we responsible for not having worshipped him, when we knew him not? The Apostle's answer is, You are not responsible up to the present time. Such ignorance or idolatry God winked at or let go unnoticed, because until now his great plan had not reached that stage of development which authorized the sending of the message to you. Now the message is for you. God has sent it. He commands all men everywhere to repent – of sins, all unrighteousness, and to come back into harmony with himself.

It may be asked, Why tell men to repent at that time more than previously? We answer, that the Apostle explains why, by saying that ***now*** God commands all men everywhere to repent because he has appointed another day of judgment. In the first judgment Adam on trial was found unworthy of eternal life and was sentenced to death. His entire race shared in his death penalty. But now in due time Christ had redeemed Adam and his race from that death sentence and thus opened the way for the appointment of another day of judgment, of trial for life or death eternal. This second trial or day of judgment would not be merely for those who would be living at the time, but would have to do with all of the race, of every nation, people, kindred and tongue, "All men everywhere." This would imply an awakening of the dead. Otherwise the millions who have already died could never have God's grace and could never have an opportunity or participation in it. The proof that this all was God's intention and that he was able to raise the dead St. Paul points out as already demonstrated by the fact that the One who redeemed the race by his death had risen from the dead and in due time would be prepared to carry out all the provisions of the Divine Plan in dealing not only with the living, but the dead of the race and giving to all a gracious opportunity for eternal life; – and the blessed opportunity of this was now presented to those who heard.

SOME MOCKED AT THE RESURRECTION

No other religion than that of the Bible teaches a resurrection of the dead. All others teach that death is a deception – that when men die they really become more alive; when they lose consciousness, they really become more intelligent. Only the Bible teaches in accord with the voice of our sense that the dead are dead and "know not anything." Only the Bible teaches that a future life is dependent upon the resurrection of the dead. Only the Bible teaches that the redemption of the dead is dependent upon the death of our Lord Jesus. Only the Bible teaches that the Redeemer must come again the second time – not again to suffer, not again as the man, but as the Lord of life and glory on the spirit plane to change his elect Bride to his own nature, and to associate her with him in his Kingdom glory, and to establish amongst men the reign of righteousness long promised, and for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

The philosophers of that day at Athens, like the philosophers of our day and of every epoch, sneered at the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Some of them denied a future life entirely; others held that human life persisted and is indestructible. All were in opposition to the Bible teaching of a ***sentence*** of death and ***redemption*** by death and a ***resurrection from death***. All interest in the teaching of the apostles vanished for the majority when

they learned that the entire philosophy rested upon the resurrection of the dead. To the worldly mind nothing seems so irrational and unreasonable as this feature of the Christian religion. This doctrine today is proving a test to many. Few can receive it. Yet all who do not receive it are very certain to stumble into some of the pitfalls of error which the Adversary is permitted to arrange now for the stumbling of all who reject the counsel of God.

NOT MANY GREAT OR WISE

Nevertheless the Apostle's mission was not in vain, for we read that "certain men clave unto him" – stuck to him. The Truth is a magnet which has a drawing power upon hearts of a certain character. The Apostle did not expect to convert many of those philosophers. He knew that not many wise, rich, great or learned according to the course of this world could come in amongst those whom the Lord is calling at the present time to constitute the Bride of Christ. He knew that their time to hear the message would be during the Millennium – in that day of judgment or trial of which he had just been telling. Some of those who declined to hear further said: "We may hear you again on this matter;" but if the Truth did not appeal to them at once it is quite doubtful if it would do so later.

Does not this same principle hold true to-day? Is it not still true that the Lord is seeking a "little flock" only? Is it not still true that acceptance of the Truth indicates those who are drawn to the Lord and guided by his holy Spirit? and that inability to see its beauty and force is an indication of unworthiness of it? Let us be content, if possible, to find and to bless with the Truth those whom the Lord our God has called and drawn, and let us be content to leave the others for his "due time" after having put the Truth before them. The condemnation of death will continue upon all except the household of faith until the time for the establishment of the great Kingdom. Then Israel will be blessed under the terms of the New Covenant; the blood for the sealing, the blood of Christ, is now being prepared in the sufferings of the Head, in which the Body is permitted to share. Then, under the provisions of that New (Law) Covenant, the blind eyes of Israel will be opened and their deaf ears will be unstopped and reconciliation made complete to them. Evidently this privilege of reconciliation will be open to all the world of mankind who, by becoming proselytes, may share the blessings of that New Covenant with Israel. And how glorious will be our privilege if we are found faithful – to be sharers with our Lord in putting that New Covenant into execution, and, as its Mediator, blessing Israel and the world!

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

We do well to keep continually in mind the thought that God, with whom we have to do, is a spirit being of unlimited power; that he can read the very thoughts and intents of our hearts and that any worship or service that we could render, that he could accept, must be honest-hearted – rendered in spirit and in truth. He seeketh only such to worship him, and of this class there are but a few at the present time. After the Covenant of Grace shall have gathered out all the household of faith, the Royal Priesthood and the Great Company of antitypical Levites, then, as a means of extending God's favor, the New Covenant will witness the thousands of the world coerced to righteousness – that all may be enabled to see, to experience the love of God and the blessings of righteousness, to the intent that all who will may come into heart harmony with him and proportionately experience Restitution, the re-writing of the Divine Law in the very character, the very being. Yet in the end, even with the world, only such as worship God in spirit and in truth will be finally approved and be granted life eternal beyond the Millennial Age.

PREACHING TO ATHENIAN PHILOSOPHERS – R. 2190

ACTS 17:22-34

"God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
– John 4:24

ALTHO the Jews of Berea received the message of Christ in a proper spirit and searched the Scriptures daily for the proofs of the gospel, a measure of persecution was at least threatened there. The Jews of Thessalonica, hearing of the progress of the gospel amongst their brethren at Berea, went thither for the express purpose of fomenting strife and hindering the gospel. Satan seems always to have plenty of agents ready and willing to oppose the truth – frequently blindly, as in Paul's own case.

We do not know that there was much persecution at Berea: the brethren merely saw that it would follow, and judged it to be the wiser plan that the Apostle Paul, who was always the chief object of attack, should at once withdraw. The absence of his powerful testimony left nothing for the opposers to contend against, and they probably speedily withdrew, satisfied with having, as they supposed, put a stop to the influence of the gospel, by chasing Paul away. But Silas remained with the Bereans, to strengthen and establish them, as Timothy had remained at Thessalonica, and Luke at Philippi, for similar reasons. Thus Paul was alone when he came to Athens, the center of the world's civilization, religious philosophy and art, at that time, as indeed it had been for several centuries. It was a college city, where resided the most eminent philosophers of the world as instructors in its great colleges to which came the brightest and ablest thinkers of the world. Some one has said of Athens: "In its prime it sent forth more great men in one hundred years than all the

Paul preaches in Athens at the altar of The Unknown God

rest of the world could show in five hundred." Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Sophocles, Aristides, Phidias, Zeno, Epicurus, Xenophon and Themistocles, still of world-wide renown, were sons of this famous city.

It would appear that there were no Jews in Athens, and this was doubtless for two reasons: **(1)** The Jews had a religious philosophy of their own which would have been in continual conflict with these heathen philosophies. **(2)** Not interested in heathen philosophies, nothing would draw them to Athens, except commerce, and Athens was not a commercial or manufacturing city. Finding no synagogue, the Apostle wandered through the streets of Athens, noting the endeavor of its people to reach, by mental philosophy, a knowledge of God, while ignorant of the holy Scriptures, the revelation of the only true God. In a city so given over to philosophical speculations, it is not surprising that such questions were discussed in the streets, in the market places and wherever its intelligent, cultured citizens came in contact with each other or with strangers. As an educated man the Apostle was well versed in the various speculations of the day, and had besides the philosophy of the divine plan which others had not.

Where the Jews were the auditors one-half of the preaching would do, for they already knew the one living and true God and acknowledged him; they already knew of Moses and the law, and of how Moses had foretold Messiah; and they were already waiting for this long promised Messiah. To such the Apostle merely needed to present the evidences that Christ fulfilled in every particular the predictions of the prophets. But with these Athenians even the true God was not known. Hence, the first point in preaching to them was to establish faith in Jehovah; the second, to establish faith in the prophets as his mouth pieces, and then third, to prove that Christ fulfilled the predictions of the prophets. This was the Apostle's first contact with undiluted heathenism, and he began by talking as the others did, in the market places, on the subject of the true God.

Noting that the Apostle was consistent and logical in his remarks, some of the leading men made an appointment for him to give a public address before the Council of the Areopagus, which occupied chief seats in the auditorium on Mars Hill, and was surrounded at its sitting with the intelligent population of this metropolis of philosophy.

For the first time the gospel is preached to the most learned and most scientific, according to the estimate of this world, – by its most able exponent on earth. We note with intense interest the method of presentation employed, and the results obtained. It was necessary first of all that these philosophers should learn of their error in supposing that there are many gods, and come to understand that there is but one living and true God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, his Son: then they would be prepared to see how the Father's law was infracted through sin; how a ransom was necessary, and that Christ came into the world and died and rose again for the justification of sinners, and their release from sin's penalty, – death.

We are impressed with the wisdom of the Apostle's method of procedure in addressing a congregation so cultured in error. Our Common Version (v.22) does the Apostle great injustice, by representing him as beginning his discourse by insulting his hearers; – telling them that they were "too superstitious." What he did say to them signified, "You are reverential to an extreme; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription – 'To the unknown God.' Whom, therefore, you worship [admittedly] without knowledge [of his name and character], him declare I unto you." What a lesson we have here of presenting the truth with wisdom, in meekness and in love.

Our respect for the Apostle's method is increased when we know that the Athenians considered themselves so well supplied with

gods that they had passed a law inflicting the death penalty upon any one who would set forth in their midst any foreign god not previously recognized in their city. (Possibly this helps to account for the absence of Jews.) Thus the Apostle seized upon the only opportunity for presenting to his hearers the true God without risking his own life, by calling attention to the fact that ***they already recognized and offered worship to the true God***, altho ignorant of his name. Such masterly wisdom must have had weight with so intelligent an audience: and apparently the Apostle received a careful hearing as he described some of the characteristics of Jehovah – far above and beyond anything which his hearers had ever claimed for their divinities.

The secret of the Apostle Paul's success, and the reason why God used him so graciously as a servant, is a lesson which all who attempt to serve the truth to others would do well to note and to apply to themselves. Was it not because he preached not himself but the Lord and his gospel? Do not many would-be teachers fail to attain results and to be more used of the Lord because their ambition really preaches self, and the gospel as a means for calling attention to self; – and do not others combine self-glorification with the gospel, and thus obtain only partial results for the Lord? The Apostle's course was self-abandonment, as he explained, "I determined to know nothing among you save Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) His knowledge on other subjects was all sunk out of sight. It is for this reason that many comparatively ignorant men have been greatly used of the Lord in the gospel service – great learning in the philosophies often proving a snare, a temptation to preach these and to make a show among men rather than to preach the divine philosophy – redemption through the blood of the cross. Let us all copy the Lord and his greatly used and thus approved servant, Paul, until the expression of our every word and act will be

"None of self and all of Thee."

Athens was full of idols and temples representing the homage to deities of various degrees of distinction. Pliny, the historian, informs us that in Nero's day Athens contained more than 3,000 public statues – of gods of various grades and of notable human heroes. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar supporting a bust of the god Hermes, and every gate-way and porch had its protecting god. Paul preached **(1)** a God so great that he not only could not be made by human hands, but that all things, both in heaven and in earth, were his creation; **(2)** a God who needed no temple or house; **(3)** a God so great that nothing could be done for him, seeing that he himself is the Creator of the world and the author of every good gift, including life itself; **(4)** that all the human family evidenced his handiwork, and all from one source or parent; and **(5)** that God had in general one great plan with reference to the entire human family. All this was very different from the confused ideas presented by the philosophers respecting various gods and the competition and strife between them as between human heroes.

Having set forth the character of God, the next point was to show that all God's creation should ***seek*** him, that he is nigh unto all that call upon him; for his power and intelligence are everywhere present. Seizing upon a truthful statement by one of their poets to the effect that all mankind are God's offspring, the Apostle endorses this, and then points out that this, being true, it logically follows that images of gold, silver and stone could not properly represent this great God.

Anticipating the question in their minds – If there is so great a God why has he not previously manifested himself to us? and why has he permitted us to look to and to worship other gods? and would he not be very angry with us, because of this false worship? the Apostle answers, No; the past period of ignorance God entirely overlooks: You are not charged with responsibility for rejecting that of which you did not know. But, ***now*** this

great God has sent forth his gracious message, that all men everywhere should come to a knowledge of him, and should repent of sins and seek to do his will.

Here is a definite statement from an inspired source informing us that the millions who lived and died in heathen darkness prior to the coming of Christ are not held responsible and will not be punished for that ignorance. And the same principle can logically be applied to all since who have not known of Christ and of the redemption through his blood. All of these must yet come to a knowledge of the truth.

But note the Apostle's reasoning: God has appointed a day of trial ("judgment") for the whole human family, in which Christ will be the righteous Judge, and in which every man – the whole world – will have a righteous trial, a fair opportunity for accepting divine favor and eternal life, or of rejecting these and receiving the wages of sin, the second death. Here, the Apostle was able to bring Christ to the attention of his hearers. The little portion of the discourse set before us omits all mention of a redemption by the second Adam, before any blessing of life or even a trial for life eternal could be offered to any: doubtless, however, this was part of the discourse, set forth along the same lines as the Apostle's argument in Romans 5 and in 1 Cor. 15.

In logical order, it was necessary that the Apostle would present the doctrine of the resurrection. **(1)** He must show that Christ, having died for our sins, did not remain dead, but was raised up and clothed with authority and power to be the Deliverer in due time of those whom he had purchased with his own blood. **(2)** He must show that the ignorant ones of preceding centuries, as they had shared the Adamic penalty, would have an opportunity also of sharing the benefits of the atonement, and he must therefore show that, altho the penalty, death, was justly enforced against all, yet God purposed an awakening from death for all mankind; and a complete resurrection to the condition enjoyed by Adam before the fall, to all who would render obedience to the Redeemer when he would be the Judge. (The mention of the high calling and the way of full consecration leading to it, he reserved for such as would accept justification.)

The Apostle held the attention of his hearers and evidently made considerable impression until it came to this last part of his discourse. But the doctrine of the resurrection ran counter to all their latest philosophical deductions which were to the effect that death is merely a change to a higher form of life. According to their philosophy there could be no resurrection of the ***dead***; for they believed that there were no dead. These philosophers had become so thoroughly imbued with the sentiments wherewith Satan deceived mother Eve ("Ye shall not surely die") that they were ready and willing to reject what they must have conceded was the grandest philosophy respecting the Deity that they had ever heard. This same error has been a stumbling block to many, hindering them from seeing the beauty and consistency of the divine plan.

The Apostle's efforts were not wholly without fruitage, for one of the Professors of the university, Dionysius, and a lady of note, Damaris, and some others believed, but evidently not satisfied with the prospect for future service, the Apostle departed for Corinth. Aside from the general lesson of this narrative other valuable lessons may be drawn.

(1) As Athens, the seat of learning, was full of idols, so the heart, even tho enriched with earthly wisdom, may be full of idols and wholly lacking of any proper conception of the great Creator and his plan. Many cultured minds have nevertheless idols of selfishness, passions, earthly ambitions and love of falsehoods, to such an extent as to reject the sublime testimony of the gospel, even when brought to their attention.

(2) Culture and refinement are not always accompaniments and indications of the Lord's

presence and the light of his grace, but quit frequently are hindrances, in that they give a measure of satisfaction which serves as a substitute for Christ and his gospel.

(3) Forms of worship are not acceptable with God: the Athenians were worshipful and reverential to an extreme. God not only seeks worshipers who have the true spirit of worship, but he arranged also that these shall have a knowledge of the truth, so that they may worship in truth, according to the truth. Hence, the declaration, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A knowledge of the truth is essential before we can worship in spirit and in truth. As a spirit of worship without the truth is not sufficient or accepted, much more a knowledge of truth is not sufficient nor acceptable without a spirit of worship.

Paul preaches at the altar of The Unknown God

PAUL'S SERMON ON MARS HILL

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said,

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious,

23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Acts 17:22-31

WHEN THE NATIONS WILL SEEK GOD – R. 4629

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." – Acts 17:27

NEW TESTAMENT evidences on this subject of seeking the Lord give the thought that not very many are in the condition of heart to seek him at the present time. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ" and the faith of Jesus should shine into their hearts. (2 Cor. 4:4.) Nevertheless, as the Apostle puts it, God is "not far from every one of us," and every one who will seek or feel after him, he will be pleased to bless by a manifestation of himself. In fact, this is the very object of this present Gospel Age – to find, to enlighten, to bless and to gather into a special class those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Those who thus seek after the Lord he guides, draws, influences. He leads them to the Lord Jesus Christ, pointing to him as the necessary way by which they may approach himself and assuring them that there is no other name given whereby they can be saved (Acts 4:12), and that all who will come unto him through Christ will be accepted.

Such as do come in this way, we have proven from our own experiences and the experiences of others, as well as from the Word, are met half way by the Lord. "Draw nigh unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you." (Jas. 4:8.) And as they draw nigh and continue to approach closer by God's grace, they are brought by and by to a full realization that God is willing to accept them as ***sacrificers***, as "members of the Body of Christ." If they fall into line with the Divine provision and present their bodies a living sacrifice, they will be looked upon as holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1); they will recognize the "high calling" to "glory and honor and immortality" with Christ. But if they fail to go on, they will thus receive the grace of God in vain. – 2 Cor. 6:1.

The Apostle intimates, not only in the text under consideration, but also in his Epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:4), that God wills that all men shall be saved; wills it in the sense that he will awaken them all from Adamic death and "bring them to a knowledge of the Truth"; that they may be recovered entirely from all imperfections that belong to Adam's condemnation, and thus brought fully into harmony with him. Because this is his will, he has made ample provisions – not only in the arrangement by which our Lord died on behalf of all mankind, that he might be the Ransomer of all, but also in the provision that all shall have the opportunity of coming to this knowledge and of benefitting thereby.

In this sermon on Mars Hill, the Apostle Paul pointed out to the men at Athens that this "unknown God," this God who was unknown to ***them***, is the great God who has divided unto men their habitation and determined their bounds; that he is the supervisor of the nations; that he determines how long and under what conditions the nations may prosper and what liberties and opportunities they may have. Then he proceeds to point out that while God has for a long time left men in ignorance and winked at many of their imperfections and flagrant wrong-doings, as though he did not notice them all, nevertheless another step has now been taken in his great Plan: "***Now*** he commands all men everywhere to repent." The Apostle further declares, I, Paul, have something to tell you about this great God and about his message – that all men everywhere should repent. Do you ask me why they should repent? I answer, for the reason that God is prepared to forgive them their sins, on this condition: He was not prepared to do this a short time ago; he was not prepared to do this until Christ died; but since Christ has died and ascended up on high and "appeared in the presence of God for ***us***" – for ***believers*** – God is now willing to accept any who come unto him through Jesus. It is proper,

therefore, that I should tell you that there is to be an opportunity of future life through him. And, furthermore, it is proper that I should tell you also that "God has appointed a Day [the great Millennial period] in which he will judge [try] ***the world*** in righteousness." The whole world will then have a trial, a righteous trial, a fair, impartial trial, a full opportunity "to come unto the knowledge of the Truth"; to come to a knowledge of right and wrong, a full opportunity to come to perfection of human life and to attain all that was lost in the fall of man. (Luke 19:10.) This message should, as far as possible, be made known to all men everywhere, because every act of their lives will have a bearing upon the future; it will either uplift them to some extent out of the depths of degradation into which the world has been plunged through ignorance and superstition and bring a development of character, or it will condemn them and bring a measure of retribution, and thus make the conditions of the future more difficult than they would be if righteousness were sought.

THE WORLD CALLED TO REPENTANCE – R. 5083

"God now commandeth men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." – Acts 17:30,31

WHEN GOD sentenced Father Adam to death He very properly said nothing about repentance, for He offered Adam no hope of a future life. If, then, no hope of a future life was known to Adam or revealed to him, why should God deal with him at all? Adam was sentenced to death, to destruction. There is no basis upon which to command a man to repent unless something is offered him as a reward for repentance.

God had put upon Adam the sentence of death, which could be removed only by the payment of a ransom-price. God fully intended that some day all mankind should have an opportunity of coming into harmony with Him and of having another trial, or judgment, for life; but it was not His due time to explain His program. Therefore, Adam lived and died without any command whatever to repent. And so did his children.

The first intimation of what God might do was given by the Prophet Enoch. But the revelation made by Enoch was not a sufficient basis for offering hope to mankind nor for telling them to repent. – Jude 14,15.

A SUGGESTION OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD

So years passed by until the time of Abraham. Then God told Abraham that He would reveal a secret to him, because Abraham was His friend. That secret was not a message to be preached, but to be believed by himself and by those who would be heirs of that promise, which was not yet applicable to any outside of Abraham's descendants. The secret was, "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 28:14.) I intend to bless the world, Abraham. If you are obedient to My instructions, your Seed will get the blessing and transmit it to the world in general. It was only by implication, therefore, that Abraham had any suggestion that a life of repentance would be rewarded.

In due time God called the children of Israel and dealt with them through Moses. Practically He said, "Do you wish to be My people? If so, come now, enter into a covenant

with Me; I will be your God and you shall be My people." – Lev. 26:12.

Israel was not commanded to repent, nor were any of the rest of the world. It was an ***invitation***, not a command. God was ready to make a covenant with them. That covenant was that they were to obey the Law, and that by their obedience to the Ten Commandments and the spirit of their covenant they would become God's people. But when they tried to keep the Law they found that they could not do so, because of inherited weakness. Hence there was nothing more to be said to them along that line. They had had their opportunity and they had failed.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

When Jesus came He kept the Law, and inherited all the promises of the Law Covenant. Then He offered a share of the Kingdom which God had promised to set up (Dan. 2:44), and blessing, honor and glory to as many of the Jews as would come into harmony with Him, as many as would walk in His steps of self-sacrifice and thus have God's favor. (John 1:12.) In substance He said, "This is the way. Trust in Me and walk in My steps. Thus you shall be My disciples. You shall share in My sufferings now, and by and by in My glory and Kingdom."

In due time, after a certain number had been gathered from the Jews, this message was extended to all the Gentiles who were in the right condition of heart. The Gentiles not having indicated their desire to come back into harmony with God as the Jewish nation had done, God then commanded them everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30.) This He did through those who were the representatives of His teaching, the Apostles and the Church. In proportion as they understood the Plan of God and were in harmony with it, they could tell their neighbors that a new condition had been established and that God would deal henceforth with the Gentiles.

THE RANSOM THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE WORLD

Why should God deal with the Gentiles now, when He had refused to deal with them before? The explanation of this new condition is that Christ had died, and God's great Plan had now matured enough to be made applicable to all men everywhere. God had appointed a day in which to judge the world in righteousness. (Acts 17:30,31.) That great Day is the next Age, the Day of Christ, the Day of Messiah's Kingdom. God has made this provision for the redemption of all through the death of Christ. Mankind were all under the death sentence, and God could not deal with them until that sentence was lifted, or until provision was made for lifting it. He has not annulled the death sentence, but He has provided a Ransom for all. – 1 Tim. 2:6.

Whoever knows of this Plan of redemption knows that God intends to give every individual of Adam's race an ***individual*** trial for life. That trial will not be merely to determine whether mankind will try to do right and battle against all the evil influences of the world, but God will subdue sin and uplift all of Adam's race who are desirous of being uplifted.

God has declared that no member of Adam's race need die. Everyone who will may return to God through the great Atonement to be effected by the Redeemer. He has not completed this work yet, but to those who have an ear to hear, the word has gone out that there is to be a future trial, and that the manner of one's life ***now*** will have a bearing upon that trial. It is proper to tell this now, because the provision has been made through Christ's death.

THE PRESENT MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Prior to the Gospel Age it was of no use to tell the people to come into harmony with God. But now the whole world is to be brought into a trial to help them and not to condemn them

– a trial to see whether they are worthy to have the everlasting life that God will provide for them and assist the willing to attain. Wherever people are willing to hear, the message is, Repent! repent! Cease from sin, and this reformation of character will have an influence upon your everlasting life.

If one is not of the Church class he is not on trial for life or death. But it will be to his advantage to live uprightly, for there is a time of reckoning coming. God has provided for this day of trial in the death of Christ. Beforehand, however, the Lord is selecting a Church class. The Lord is thus preparing a great class of missionaries who will do everything possible to assist men out of sin and degradation back to harmony with God.

In times past God acted as though He did not notice when sin was committed – unless it was a grievous sin. Then He merely took the lives of the sinners under unpleasant conditions – they went to sleep. The Prophet Ezekiel says that God took all of the Sodomites away as He saw good. (Ezek. 16:50.) After the Church's trial, or judgment, shall have been finished and the overcomers shall have been found worthy, then, in that time of the world's judgment, the Sodomites will have an opportunity as had the Jews who heard Jesus at the first advent. And it will be much more tolerable then for the people of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, etc.; for the latter had had opportunities of knowledge, against which they had sinned; they therefore had more wilfulness in the matter than did the Sodomites. – See Matt. 11:21-24.

At that time God had sent no command to the Sodomites to repent. So God merely "winked at" (overlooked) the ignorance and sin of that time. (Acts 17:30.) He neither threatened nor did anything else in the matter. He merely blotted the Sodomites out of existence. Their fate served as a foreshadowing, as the Apostle says, that God will not forever permit mankind to remain in sin, but that He will destroy the sinner. None shall be destroyed, however, until first he shall have had the opportunity for everlasting life, secured for every member of Adam's race, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

JESUS' RESURRECTION THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FAVOR

The Apostle recognizes the fact that the judgment had not begun in his day. He points forward to the Day of Christ and declares that God's assurance now set before the world of mankind is that there will be a future time of judgment. Through Christ's sacrificial death the opportunity for everlasting life will come to all. Mankind have already been condemned in Adam. They could not have another trial until the condemnation of the first trial was lifted. Therefore, not until God had provided a Redeemer would He command any to repent. The Apostle says that God's assurance to mankind in this matter is based upon the fact that He had raised Christ from the dead. – Acts 17:31.

When God had raised Jesus from the dead it became a testimony that His was a sacrificial death, an acceptable offering. And Jesus' ascension was a still further demonstration that this One whom the Father had raised from the dead by His own power, was to be the great King to rule, the great Priest to succor, assist and instruct, and the great Judge to direct and order the affairs of the world and to give proper rewards in the great Day of God. Whoever therefore hears about Jesus' death and resurrection should understand that this was God's redemption arrangement. They should also be informed that mankind are all sinners and that death is the penalty of sin. If any should ask, How does Jesus' death affect humanity? we show that God has highly exalted Him to be a Savior. In God's due time, as soon as the elect class shall have been completed and the reign of six thousand years of sin and evil shall have ended, then He will grant redemption from sin to all – to the Jew first and afterwards to the Gentile.

As many as hear ***now*** should ***repent***; but as many as do not hear in the present time are not commanded by God to repent. St. Paul's thought seems to be, Repent now and thus influence your future conditions, even if you do not wish to become a member of the Body of Christ. Thousands of millions of mankind have gone down into death. When they are awakened during the period of Messiah's reign, this will be the great message – "God has opened up a fountain for cleansing from sin and uncleanness. Whosoever will may partake of the blessing and reconciliation with God and thereby attain everlasting life." – See Zech. 13:1; Rev. 22:17.

At present the god of this world hath blinded the world's eyes of understanding (2 Cor. 4:4), but soon their eyes will be opened. The time is coming when all shall see and hear, and when none, from the least to the greatest, will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for all shall know Him. Then when they know, each will be responsible. At the end of the Millennial Age when they shall have received their full blessing through the Mediator they will be required to do God's will on earth even as it is done in Heaven. – Jer. 31:33,34.

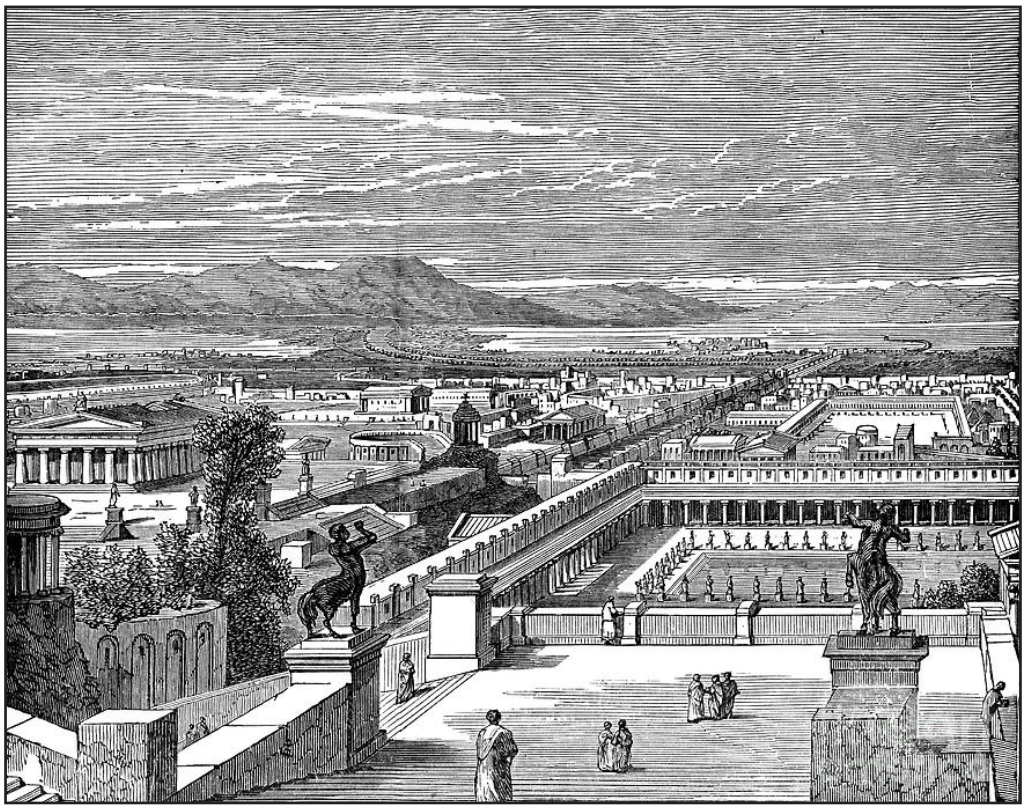
FUTURE LIFE INFLUENCED BY PRESENT CONDUCT

It is a very important feature of our work to let our light so shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven – not ***their*** Father, but ***our Father***. (1 Pet. 2:12.) The present time is not the world's, but the Church's visitation. God is seeking the people who are in a voluntary condition of righteousness. This is not the time for dealing with the world, but for God's people, as burning and shining lights, to reprove all sin. In proportion as the light shines out it will reprove darkness.

If we speak at all about a future Age it is a special part of our duty to make clear to our hearers that the conduct of life at the present time will have a bearing on the future life. To say that there are ***two*** chances – a chance now and a chance by and by – is ***wholly wrong***. We say to them that during this Gospel Age there is only one chance, and the only way to get that chance is to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

But for those who are by and by to be under the Mediatorial Kingdom it is proper to tell them that a life of obedience to God in harmony with the principles of righteousness will be a blessing to themselves in the present, and also in the future. There are a great many people who are living upright and honorable lives and who are doing a great deal of good in this present time. If they thought they were not doing good, they would be discouraged. An incentive to a high standard of life would be taken from them; for they believe that righteous living now has a bearing on the future. In this they are right. But their standard is not so high as that set forth in the Scriptures for the Church. That standard is necessarily high; for saints, and saints alone, are to be joint-heirs with Christ and members of the Bride class.

A great mistake was made in the past when Brother Calvin declared that the non-elect were to be roasted to all eternity. On the contrary, we find the teaching of God's Word to be that the non-elect are to be blessed by the Elect with an opportunity for life on the earthly plane. God will use the elect class for the purpose of blessing the world of mankind. God has a loving, sympathetic Plan for all of His creatures, which will be revealed to them in His own due time.



Ancient Corinth

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.
2 And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.
3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked, for by occupation they were tentmakers.
4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:1-4

GOD'S PEOPLE IN CORINTH – R. 2191

ACTS 18:1-11

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
– 1 Corinthians 3:11

CORINTH as a city was almost the opposite of Athens. Corinth was as completely given over to commerce and sinful pleasures as Athens was given over to religious philosophy and idol worship. We have seen what poor success attended the gospel amongst the superstition-blinded philosophers of the religious metropolis; and we feel curious to know whether its effect will be more or less amongst the non-religious of Corinth. The Lord's testimony settles the matter. In a vision he encouraged the Apostle not to be afraid but to speak boldly, assuring him that he would be with him and protect him; adding, – "***I have much people in this city***."

Here we see the principle of the divine policy in respect to the sending forth of the gospel. The Lord knew the honest-hearted ones beforehand; and even tho they did not know him, and had not yet accepted of Christ, "the only name," God nevertheless spoke of things to come as tho they already were accomplished, and called the earnest ones who hungered and thirsted after righteousness ***his people***. When we remember that the Lord specially directed the Apostle into Macedonia and suffered him to remain but a short time in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Athens, and that his stay in Corinth was for a year and a half, and then note these words, – "I have much people in this city," it gives us the thought that the objective point of this missionary tour in the divine program was Corinth. And indeed, at the close of his ministry in Corinth the Apostle was sent nowhere else, but took his journey homeward, visiting enroute the Churches he had previously established in Asia-Minor. What a lesson we have here of the divine superintendence of his own Word and plan! what an illustration of the statement, "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and that our God is "the same yesterday, today and forever!" He still knows his own; he still superintends his work; he still sends through appropriate agents and at the proper season just such helps as are needful to his people.

Every laborer (every public and every private laborer in the vineyard) should mark the lesson which the Lord has here set before us. And each should the more carefully watch for the leadings of divine providence and realize that only as he is a co-worker together with God can he accomplish anything. As the Master said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Every minister of the gospel (and this includes all who serve the Lord in any degree or capacity) can find in the Apostle Paul a most wonderful lesson of practical humility. Upon entering Corinth he did not look up some philosopher and endeavor to ingratiate himself with him as a fellow-philosopher and teacher, who could not dig and was ashamed to beg. He did nothing which would compromise the truth, and his influence or liberty as a servant of the truth. Like all Jews of that time he had learned a trade and he at once set to work to earn an honest living, while seeking the door of opportunity for his great life-work, the preaching of the gospel. His trade, tent-making, was a good one in the sense that it afforded employment in every seaport town; but a poor one in that not being difficult, it had much competition, and was poorly paid. Nevertheless, there is not the slightest intimation that the Apostle repined or in any degree rebelled against the leadings of divine providence, altho he probably queried why it was that the Lord, who had specially called and commissioned him to the work of the gospel, had so circumstanced him that it was impossible to give any but the fag-ends of his time to this service to which he had devoted himself, and to which he had been accepted. Under the leadings of divine providence he became acquainted with Aquilla and Priscilla,

poor Jews, outcasts for their religion, who were earning their living by the same trade. Their troubles had no doubt mellowed their hearts and made them ready for the gospel of Christ, and the Lord brought it first to their humble dwelling, and they became devoted servants of the Lord's cause.

The Apostle was fervent in spirit and not slothful in the great business to which his life was devoted; and hence he lost no opportunity of looking up the Jews of Corinth and attending the Sabbath services in their synagogue. Apparently, however, the difficulties and persecutions endured tended to make the Apostle cautious, if by any means he might improve upon the methods of the past, by the use of greater wisdom. We see how he left Thessalonica and then Berea as the persecution manifested itself; and we see that he studiously sought to avoid persecution at Athens; and now at Corinth apparently he did not start out to preach Christ boldly to the Jews, but rather reasoned with them, and with certain Gentiles who were feeling after God, for a number of Sabbath days, along general lines; as a preparation for the great message he had to deliver. He persuaded both Jews and Greeks with reference to the Law, its types and ceremonies and sacrifices; and with reference to the significance of the prophecies; but he avoided that which would awaken prejudice until he would first arouse faith and fervor in his hearers, and their confidence in his sincerity, and in his fidelity to the Lord's Word.

But when Silas and Timothy joined him, the opportune moment came: and the Apostle felt such a pressure of earnest desire to make known the Lord Jesus, as the grand hope of Israel and the world, that he could keep it back no longer and spoke it forth.

Then came the opposition and blasphemy which previous experiences had warned him to expect: but by this time he had made some impression, not only upon some of the Jews, but upon the religiously disposed Greeks, who had been interested in Judaism. Foreseeing that thereafter the Jews would consider him an intruder in their synagogue, he withdrew, accepting as a place for meetings the home of Justus, who apparently was a Greek convert first to Judaism, and now to Christianity. This change would make it more favorable to all Greeks to come and hear, and at the time being near the synagogue would keep the gospel of Christ before the attention of the Jews. The result was that "much people," the Lord's people, were found by the truth, including the ruler of the synagogue and many citizens of Corinth.

Had the Apostle been either a cold or a lukewarm Christian and servant of the Lord, or one of the "fearful and unbelieving" kind, he might have attended the synagogue and for years kept his "light under a bushel;" and in such an event it probably would shortly have become extinguished, according to the divine rule; and he would have lost his place as a servant of the gospel and some one else who had a sufficiency of faith, love and zeal would have been permitted to do the work. But the Apostle never kept his light under a bushel, but lifted it high that all might see the glorious light of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, which had shone into his heart. He continually showed forth "the praises of him who had called him out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Judging from his past experiences, the Apostle might have expected persecution which would have permitted him to stay but a short time in Corinth. It was probably for his instruction in this particular that he was granted the vision, instructing him that God would protect him from persecution here, because he had much people to be reached by the truth. Nevertheless, it was necessary and the Lord's instruction, that he should speak the truth boldly and not hold his peace, nor expect that the Lord would work a miracle to reach his people in Corinth without a public testimony.

It was during this stay in Corinth that the Apostle received a loving contribution for his support from the converts at Philippi, which gave evidence that Luke, who remained with them, was performing a faithful ministry and stirring up their hearts with zeal for the Lord and his service. It was during this period, also, that he received through Silas and Timothy a good message from the Churches at Thessalonica and Berea; and it was during this stay in Corinth also that the two letters were written to the Church at Thessalonica. Nevertheless, it is respecting this very period of his stay in Corinth that the Apostle subsequently wrote to the Corinthians (1:4; 2:3); in which he mentions his weakness (bodily sickness) and "fear and trembling;" probably the result partly of his weak physical condition and of the remembrance of the trying experiences already passed through.

Subsequently he writes apparently referring back to experiences at Corinth, – "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. We are made the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." – 1 Cor. 4:11-13.

Every servant of the truth to-day can find rich lessons in the experiences and faithfulness and perseverance of the great Apostle. In infinite wisdom the Lord permitted this his chiefest servant amongst men, next to the Lord Jesus, to preach the truth under unfavorable circumstances and with many drawbacks. Paul learned that the servant is not above his Master; and so must every other faithful follower learn the same lesson of faithfulness and endurance – overcoming self and difficulties in the name and strength of the Lord and his Word: upheld by loving zeal and by the exceeding great and precious promises of the Father's Word. In due time we shall reap the reward, if we ***faint not*** by the way.

PAUL AT CORINTH – R. 3143

ACTS 18:1-11

"Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
– 1 Corinthians 3:1

ATHENS did not prove to be a very successful field for the Apostle Paul's labors. He quickly perceived that, although its citizens were chiefly engaged in hearing new things and in philosophizing on every subject, including religion, nevertheless, the tendency of science and philosophy, falsely so-called, so occupied their attention and so satisfied their minds that they were not as ready for the truth as some others less highly educated and less philosophical. The Apostle's experience in this respect coincides with that of all who, in sincerity, preach the gospel of Christ stripped of all human invention and philosophy. His experience illustrates his declaration that God does not choose many great or wise or learned, according to the course or standard of this world, but chiefly the poor of this world, socially, philosophically and financially, to be heirs of the Kingdom; because this class is more inclined to receive the faith and to become rich therein.

Leaving Athens, the Apostle journeyed about forty miles to Corinth, a prominent city of Greece, though very different from Athens. It was a commercial city, noted for its manufactures, architecture, paintings, Corinthian brass, or bronze, etc. It was much less moral than Athens, much less refined,

much less given to the study of religious themes, but, nevertheless, a better field for the gospel. Where religious forms and ceremonies become popular they are apt to have correspondingly the less weight and force. Where sin, immorality and irreligion are popular, those minds which have a religious trend are apt to be freer, more open for the truth, because unsatisfied by formalism, and because they more keenly recognize righteousness by its sharp contrast with the sin abounding. Similarly today, the truth is likely to receive a cooler reception amongst those whose religious sensibilities are to some extent satisfied by forms and ceremonies: truth usually makes better progress today in places where to some extent irreligion seems to have the upper hand (as in Corinth), and where, therefore, virtue is at a higher premium. The heart most ready for the truth is the one which is not satiated and stupefied with religious formalism; but which realizes to some extent the exceeding sinfulness of sin and longs for the righteousness which is of God. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is induced by such conditions. Like the Apostle, we are to discern the most fruitful fields, and spend our energies upon them, leaving the other fields for a more convenient season, whether it shall come during the present age or during the Millennium. The Apostle apparently stayed but a few days at Athens, but abode a year and a half at Corinth – the irreligious city, where he found many honest-hearted people, to whom the Lord directed the gospel through him.

The Emperor Claudius Caesar was reigning at this time, and the historian says that he "drove the Jews from Rome, because they were incessantly raising tumults at the instigation of a certain Chrestus." This was about the year A.D. 52, about twenty years after Pentecost, and it is surmised by some that the historian wrote Chrestus instead of Christus, a less common name, and that his reference was to dissensions among the Jews respecting the principles of Christianity, which by this time had doubtless reached Rome. That Christianity was already established in Rome before Paul's going there seems to be implied by his expression, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome also." (Rom. 1:8-15.) The supposition is that Aquila, a Jew, with his wife, Priscilla, a Gentile, who were amongst those driven from Rome, had received the message of the gospel, and that the Apostle going to Corinth found Aquila readily by reason of their being of the same craft or trade – tent-makers.

It was customary at that time that the sons of all the upper class of people should learn a trade, however well educated otherwise. St. Paul's trade as a tent-maker stood him now in good place, enabling him to provide for his necessities, while preaching the gospel of Christ. From his own explanation of the matter we learn that even after a considerable number of believers had been gathered at Corinth as a Church, the Apostle maintained himself by his trade – not because it would have been a sin for him to have received money and support from the believers there, but because he hoped that the gospel would commend itself more to many if its chief expounder were seen to be laboring not for the meat that perisheth, nor for wealth, but preaching the gospel without charge – laying down his life for the brethren. There is a lesson in this for all of the Lord's people who have talent as ministers of the Word. Our object, like that of the Apostle, should be seen to be that "we seek not ***yours***, but ***you***." – 2 Cor. 12:14.

The Apostle evidently lost no time in showing his colors – engaging with as much wisdom as possible in the preaching of the gospel to the Jews and Jewish proselytes from amongst the Greeks in their synagogue. He was not in this an intruder, for such was the custom of the synagogue; – that any person of ability had the privilege of giving an exposition of the teachings of the Law and the Prophets. The Apostle was a man of some ability, and apparently in every city he at first was welcomed; the subsequent hatred of himself and his theme being the logical result of the

wrong condition of heart on the part of those who heard – their unwillingness to receive the truth in the love of it – their preference for the traditions of the elders, with their more or less error, rejecting the light of the truth as it came to them. We find similar conditions today in Christendom, and are following the Scriptural precedent when we approach as closely as we can to the synagogues of our time, and as nearly as possible do as the Apostle did, – reasoning with and persuading the attendants at divine worship. Under the usages of our time it would be improper for us now to attempt such a discussion or reasoning inside church buildings. The nearest approach we have is through the printed page, on the pavement, near the churches, – but far enough away to avoid reasonable prejudice and opposition. Let it be noticed also that the proper method of presenting the truth today, as in the Apostle's time, is not by haranguing, but by reasonable presentation – appealing to the testimony of the Word of God in a logical and a reasonable manner. Let us rejoice that we find ourselves in such good accord with apostolic methods, and resolve that we will refrain from any other methods, however popular they may be with those who follow not with us.

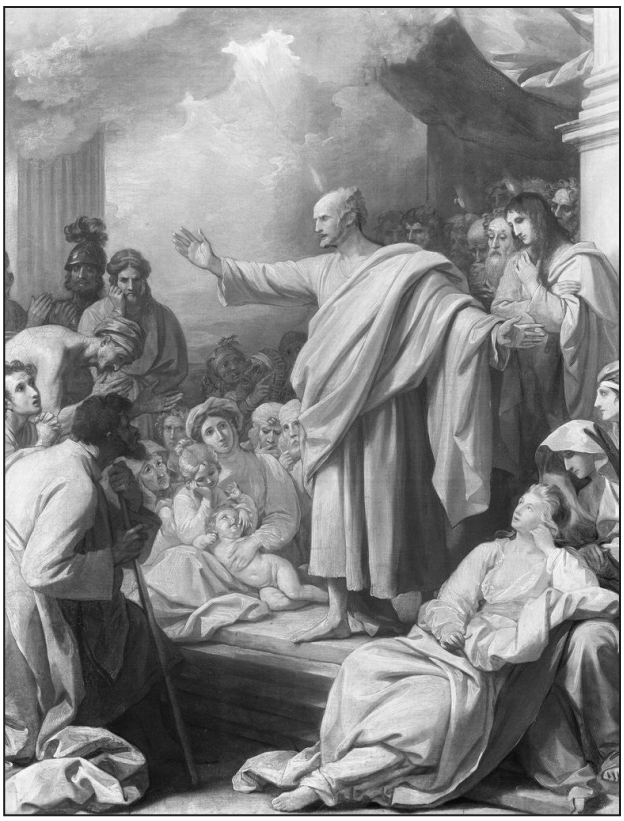
How long the Apostle continued in this way is not distinctly declared, but in his first letter to that church, written some time after, he remarks, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit, and with power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The word "weakness" in this text may be properly understood to imply that the Apostle was physically weak, possibly for a time ailing to such an extent as to be unable to work at his trade, because, referring again to the matter (2 Cor. 11:9) he intimates that for a time he was in want. This noble soldier of the cross was evidently permitted of the Lord to have a little season of measurable discouragement, when the sunshine of divine favor was to some extent beclouded by temporal difficulties: probably his physical weakness to some extent produced melancholy – "trembling with fear." He had no thought of abandoning the warfare in which he had enlisted himself even unto death, but apparently his recent experiences at Thessalonica, at Berea and at Athens, were causing him to wonder whether or not he was too aggressive in the presentation of the gospel – whether or not he was inclined needlessly to bring upon himself persecution, and was thus perhaps interfering with the Lord's work, rather than helping it forward, as he desired. Now he was, for the time, at least, disposed to be extremely careful how he presented the message, – how that, as our Golden Text expresses it, there is no salvation, no harmony with God, no eternal life by the law, nor by any other means than through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was about this time that the Lord comforted and encouraged the Apostle by the arrival of Silas and Timothy, whom he had left in Berea. They brought with them not only the comfort and encouragement of a good report of the work behind them, the fruitage of his labors, but additionally brought presents from the brethren, which supplied his necessities, and caused his heart to rejoice because of the evidence of their brotherly love, and that the gospel had reached their hearts and even down into their pocket-books. The presence of these two fellow-helpers, in whom he had so much confidence, was a refreshment of spirit to the Apostle. Their coming not only brought physical strength, but an energy of spirit – an increased earnestness and force to his preaching: he no longer felt so timid, trembling, fearful. This is still true amongst the Lord's people – the strongest of the brethren need the help, the encouragement, the assistance of others. The Lord has so arranged it that we may not feel ourselves entirely self-sufficient, and that even our proper leaning upon the Lord shall seem to require also the co-operation, encouragement, sympathy and love of the fellow-laborers in the vineyard.
Who that has borne any measure of labor and heat of the day in the gospel service cannot

sympathize with this thought? Here, then, is a way in which many of the Lord's dear people who have not themselves the largest amount of talent or opportunity for service may be co-laborers and assistants in the gospel work. The Apostle mentions these helpers in the same breath with the more able servants of the truth, saying, "Ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilst ye became the companions of them that were so used." – Heb. 10:32,33.

Encouraged, revived in spirit, the Apostle was bolder now to tell the Jews and Greek proselytes plainly that there is no salvation except through Christ. The effect of this plain declaration was that he was no longer made welcome in the synagogue, and the opposition becoming violent, he shook his raiment, as an indication that he had nothing further to present, and would discontinue the discussion, declaring that their responsibility rested with themselves; that he had done all in his power to preach the good tidings to them first, as was proper; but that now henceforth, according to the scriptural declaration, the message should be proclaimed outside the synagogue, to any who had ears to hear it and hearts to receive it. The new meeting was started close to the synagogue, to the intent that the message he had already delivered might be impressed more and more upon those who had heard it – that they should not forget his declaration that the promise made to the fathers was in process of fulfilment in Christ, and those who accept him.

One of the chief men of the synagogue, and various of the people at Corinth were favorably impressed by the gospel message, and the Church of Corinth thus took its start in the house of Justus. The believers testified their acceptance by baptism – the true baptism of consecration, we may be sure, first, but also the outward symbolic water baptism, which would be a testimony to others and which is referred to in this lesson.



St. Paul Preaching to Corinthians

The Apostle, still meditating the propriety of greater moderation in preaching Jesus and the resurrection, was by this time, perhaps, feeling fearful of further difficulties with the Jews, and the trouble they could stir up with the authorities. Doubtless he had in mind previous experiences, and was debating mentally whether or not he should leave before the persecution set in, – whether or not it was the Lord's will that he should be so courageous in the presentations of the truth as to awaken further hostilities against himself and all the brethren. The Lord came to the assistance of his faithful servant, and instructed him in a dream that he should neither leave nor hold his peace – that there were many people there of right condition of heart to receive the truth.

It is an encouragement to us to note this, another evidence that the Lord himself has supervision of his own work, and guides those who are truly his servants, – who seek not their own will nor their own honor, but to glorify him in their bodies and spirits which are his. The necessity for such admonishing

by dreams is less today than in the Apostle's day, because the Word of the Lord is now complete, and in the hands of his people in convenient form, that they can, through the experience and instruction of the apostles, know what to expect and how to do; – whereas the Apostle was treading a new path and needed to be guided therein. We of today may know assuredly that it is the Lord's will that we should exercise wisdom in the presentation of his Word, and that grace should be poured upon our lips, that they may minister blessing to the hearers; but that we shall not hold our peace nor flee to another city until persecution has come to such a pitch as to almost necessitate removal.

We should not dare to say that the Lord might not use a dream today to instruct and guide his people, as he did the Apostle, but we do say that there is less necessity for such special direction, since the general directions of his Word are now explicit and amplified. We do suggest, however, that as the Apostle says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits,"* so we may well say to ourselves, Believe not every dream, but test the dream – whether it be of God or not. A dream must never lead us in opposition to the written Word of God, but if it can be understood in harmony with the ***Word*** and its reasonable interpretation, we should rejoice in it and be thereby encouraged to follow the Word. If the dream agree not with this Word it is because there is no light in it. (Isa. 8:20.) We are confident that many dreams are not of God, the majority probably being of indigestion, and some quite probably of the evil one. Hence, we have the more need of care that we follow not a dream, because it is a dream, but at very most permit it to direct us to the plain instruction of the Lord's Word.

The Lord's promise that no man should set on the Apostle to hurt was fulfilled; for, although a disturbance was created and he was taken before the magistracy, no violence was done him, and the case was dismissed by the Roman governor. As with the Apostle, so with us; in the Lord's wisdom varying experiences may be to our advantage. Sometimes it may be advantageous to us and the cause that we should seem to be defeated and forced to flight. We may rely, however, that the Lord understands the situation fully, and will not permit his work to be disconcerted and interrupted to its real disadvantage. Long ago some one said, "I am immortal until my work is finished;" and we may rely upon it that this is practically true of all engaged in the Lord's service – that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." He will use and protect and guide them in their affairs, in ways that will be to his pleasement, and eventually to their highest welfare, – to the intent that all of his good purposes shall be accomplished.

Why, then, should we fear what man may do unto us, or be distressed in regard to the Lord's work, as though Satan or any other evil power could prevail against it? Nevertheless, it is for us to show our devotion, not only by our zeal, but also by our prudence. While God knows what will prosper, he declares of us, "Thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that" – therefore, we are to proceed in the Lord's work as though the entire responsibility rested upon us, but in our hearts are to recognize that the entire weight and responsibility rests with the Lord.

Our Golden Text gives us the central theme of the Apostle's preaching on every occasion. It would be a poor text for Higher Critics, for Evolutionists, for Theosophists, for Christian Scientists, and for most other of the new gospels so numerous in our day. Let us hold fast to the same message which the Apostle preached, which recognizes no other foundation than Christ, and no other Church and no other salvation than that built upon that foundation. Other structures, built upon other foundations, are anti-Christian, however smooth their philosophy, however arrayed in a garment of light to deceive, if possible, the very elect.

ST. PAUL AT CORINTH –R. 5919

ACTS 18:1-11

"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." – Acts 18:9

ATHENS did not prove to be a very successful field for the Apostle Paul's labors. He quickly perceived that, although its citizens were chiefly engaged in hearing new things and in philosophizing on every subject, nevertheless the tendency of science and philosophy, falsely so-called, occupied their attention and so satisfied their minds that they were not as ready for the Truth as were some others less highly educated and less philosophical. The Apostle's experience in this respect coincides with that of all who in sincerity preach the Gospel of Christ stripped of all human invention and philosophy, and also illustrates his declaration that God does not choose many wise or great or learned, according to this world's standard, but chiefly the poor of this world – poor socially, philosophically and financially – to be the heirs of the Kingdom; for this class is more inclined to receive the faith and to become rich therein.

Leaving Athens, St. Paul journeyed about forty miles to Corinth, a prominent commercial city of Greece, noted for its manufactures, architecture, paintings, bronzes, etc. It was much less moral than was Athens, much less refined, but nevertheless a better field for the Gospel. Where religious forms and ceremonies become popular, they are apt to have correspondingly the less weight and force. But where sin, immorality and irreligion are popular, those minds which have a religious trend are apt to be more free, more open for the Truth. Unsatisfied by formalism, this class more keenly recognize righteousness because of its sharp contrast with the sin abounding.

Similarly today, the Truth is likely to receive a cooler reception amongst those whose religious sensibilities are to some extent satisfied by forms and ceremonies. The heart most ready for the Truth is the one which is not satiated and stupefied with religious formalism, but which realizes to some extent the exceeding sinfulness of sin and longs for the righteousness which is of God. Like the Apostle, we are to discern the most fruitful fields and to spend our energy upon them, leaving the other fields for a more convenient season, whether it shall come during the present Age or during the Millennium.

LESSONS FROM ST. PAUL'S EXPERIENCES

Apparently the Apostle was considerably cast down at this time. His first letter to the Corinthian Church, written later on, clearly implies his discouragement and possible sickness. He wrote, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." His rough experiences at Philippi, his small success at Athens, the slenderness of his purse and his need of fellowship – all contributed to make him downcast; and he informs us that the Lord encouraged him with a vision.

Soon after his arrival at Corinth St. Paul found Aquila and Priscilla his wife. They were tent-makers; and this being the Apostle's trade, he abode with them and labored. It was customary at that time that the sons of all the upper class of people should learn a trade, however well educated otherwise. St. Paul's trade stood him now in good place, enabling him to provide for his necessities while preaching the Gospel of Christ. From his own explanation of the matter we learn that even after a considerable number of believers had been gathered at Corinth as a Church, the Apostle maintained himself by his trade. His reason for so doing was not that it would have been a sin for him to receive money and support from the believers there, but that he hoped that the Gospel would commend itself the more to many if its chief expounder were seen to be laboring not for the meat which perisheth, nor for wealth, but preaching the Gospel without charge – laying

down his life for the brethren.

Of this period the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians, "Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you, in all our affliction and distress, by your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:7.) Later, he wrote of his experience to the Corinthians, saying, "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labor, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, page 202 we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." – 1 Corinthians 4:11-13.

Many of us can find a lesson in St. Paul's experiences. If God permitted him to be in want, to be traduced, slandered, oppressed – if he needed such experiences in order to bring out the best that was in him and to make his epistles the more useful to the Church – possibly the Lord's dealings with us at times may be with the same end in view – our preparation for further usefulness in His service.

ST. PAUL "PRESSED IN SPIRIT"

Notwithstanding all of his discouragements and the fact that his tent-making labors barely sufficed to provide for him things decent and honorable, the Apostle never forgot that his chief mission in life was the preaching of the Gospel. If the earning of his daily bread hindered his preaching during the week he at least took his Sabbath days for the more important work whenever he could reach a congregation of the Jews. We read that he reasoned with them in the synagogue every Sabbath day. But apparently he was under a measure of constraint and did not speak with his accustomed boldness and vigor, perhaps because of the lack of moral support, which is an important factor with all and an essential with many.

Finally Silas and Timothy arrived, bringing with them not only good fellowship and encouraging news from Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi, but also a gift, as the Apostle himself tells us – quite probably from Lydia, the seller of purple dyes, supposed to have been comfortably circumstanced. The effect of these encouragements is intimated. St. Paul "was pressed in spirit" – he felt a fresh vigor urging him to present his Message more zealously and to bring matters to a focus at the synagogue.

After testifying with great boldness and finding that his Message was repelled by the majority of the synagogue, the Apostle forced the crisis himself by shaking his garment as if he would not take from them even the dust, saying to those who had opposed and blasphemed, "Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean. From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

There are times when positiveness is absolutely necessary, even though it cause a division amongst those who profess to serve the same God. There are times when much more good can be thus obtained than by a continuance under disadvantageous conditions. Oil and water will not mix; and time spent in trying to blend them is altogether wasted. When positive bitterness and hatred are manifested, as in the case under consideration, it is better to withdraw.

But neither the Apostle nor we would recognize as proper or at all allowable that the Lord's people should quarrel and take offense one with the other over trifles unworthy of consideration. The shaking off of the dust not only was what our Lord had suggested (Matthew 10:14), but was a custom of the time – a warning, as it were, that the Apostle felt that he had discharged his entire duty and now left the responsibility upon their own shoulders.

The effect was good in two ways: **(1)** It helped Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, to take a decided stand; whereas otherwise

he might have been stunted in his spiritual development. Crispus decided for the Lord Jesus, and took his stand with the Apostle and a few others **(2)** The fact that the Jews had repudiated the Apostle and his Message would draw the attention of the Gentiles more particularly to his Gospel. Some of these Gentiles already believed. The new meetings were held in the home of Justus, a reverent man who resided near the synagogue. Thus as the Jews attended the synagogue worship they would be continually reminded of St. Paul's Message in the synagogue, which would be an incentive for them to enter the house of Justus and hear more respecting the fulfilment of the prophecies in Jesus.

ST. PAUL ENCOURAGED

The result was that a considerable number of the Corinthians believed and were baptized, thus symbolizing their consecration to do the will of the Lord. Thus we see that opposition is not necessarily an injurious thing to the Lord's Cause. On the contrary, it is safe to say that a most dangerous condition is stagnation.

Evidently the Lord saw that His servant Paul needed some special encouragement at this time. Hence another vision was granted, in which the Apostle was told, "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."

What an insight this incident gives us as to the Divine supervision of the Gospel Message and its servants! How these words remind us of the promise that the Lord will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will with every temptation provide also a way of escape! (1 Corinthians 10:13.) That vision and its message, we may be sure, were not for the Apostle merely, but for all the Lord's people from that time until now. The same God is rich unto all that call upon Him, and able both to shield and to deliver all of His servants. Therefore He will permit only such experiences as His infinite Wisdom sees will be advantageous to His Cause and will work out for His servants a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The Lord's statement that He had much people in Corinth teaches us a lesson also. It shows that the Lord knows the hearts of all, and that He has a care not only for His saints, but also for those who have not yet heard His message, but whose hearts are in a favorable attitude of honesty, sincerity. A further lesson comes to us in this connection: We are to remember that the Lord is His Own Superintendent of Missions, and that He is able to guide His consecrated servants, not only as to direction and place of service, but also as respects the time they shall remain to accomplish His will and as respects the character of the experiences necessary for them in order best to accomplish His purposes.

The more firmly our faith can grasp this situation, the more we can rely upon the Lord and use His wisdom instead of our own, the more successful shall we be as His servants, and the more happy and contented; for we shall realize that all things are working together for good to all who are His, to all submitted to His guiding care.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS OF TEACHING

Corinth was nicknamed the Vanity Fair of the World; for it was a center of frivolity, pleasure-seeking, etc. It is said to have been one of the most licentious and profligate cities of its day. At first the thought may seem very strange to us that this vilest of the great cities should yield larger spiritual results than did any other, so much so that the Lord would especially declare that He had "much people" there, and would providentially detain His ambassador there for a year and a half, while in other places he had been permitted to remain only a few days or weeks.

The philosophy of the matter seems to be this: Outward morality frequently leads to a pharisaical spirit of self-righteousness, which

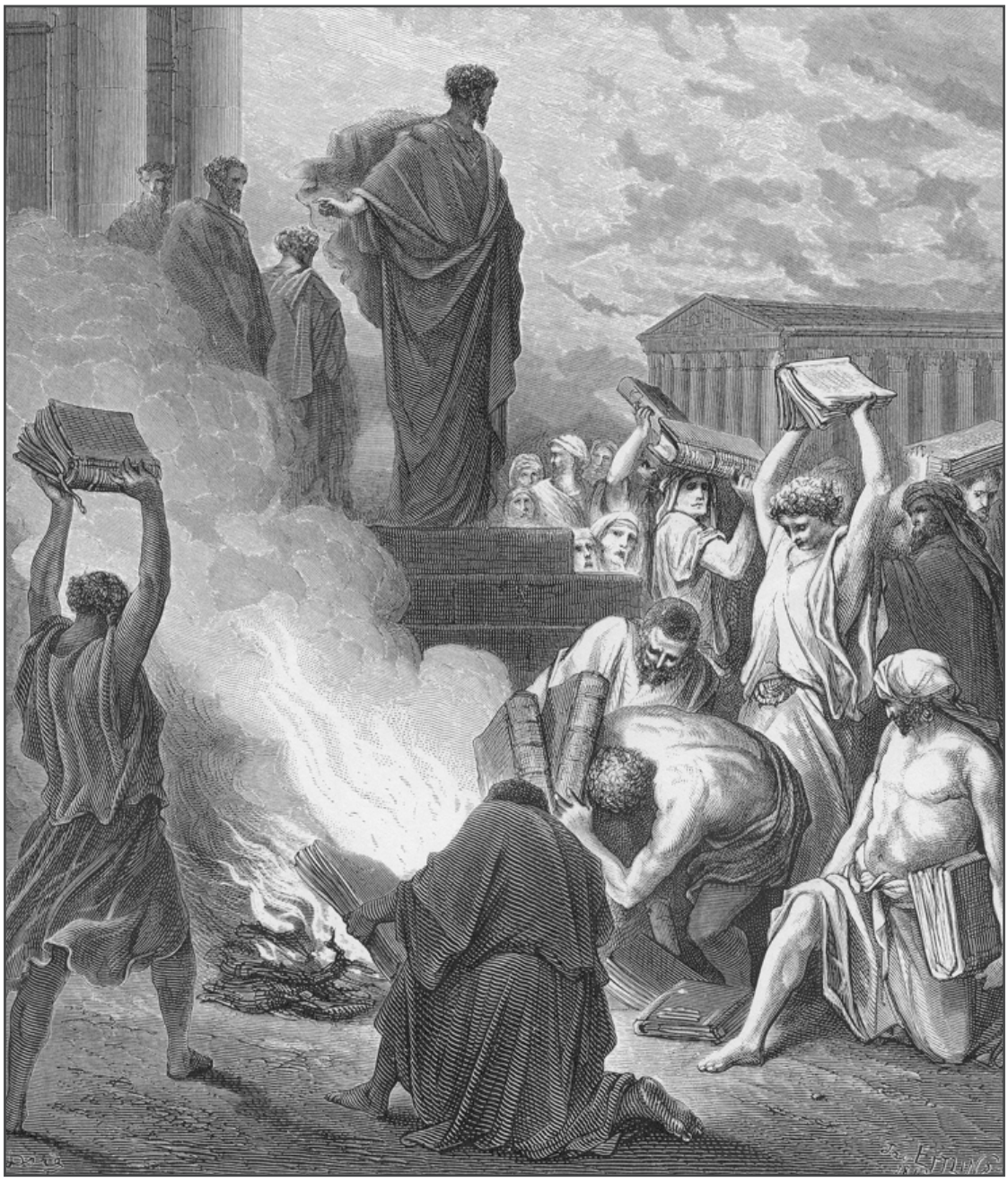
is a most pernicious and deadly foe to true righteousness. On the other hand, where sin stands out glaringly it has a repulsive effect upon the pure in heart, upon all who love righteousness; and this repulsion from the evil seems to prepare such hearts the better for a genuine consecration to the Lord and to enable them to receive His Message. This theory holds good, at least in the missionary work at Corinth, as in contrast with that of places much more respectable in reputation.

The lesson for us in this connection is that we should ever be on guard in our own hearts against this self-righteous spirit of outward observance, which lacks true holiness, true sanctification. It is along this line that our Lord found fault with one of the seven Churches, saying, "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Revelation 3:16,17.) This is our Lord's charge against the present state of the nominal church – so rich in earthly advantages, so self-satisfied. Let us be on guard lest in any manner or to any degree such a lukewarmness should come over us and we should lose the Divine favor.

24 Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.
25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.
26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.
27 And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him, and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,
28 for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples
2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."
3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."
4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."
5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 18:24-28 – 19:1-5



St. Paul at Ephesus, by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

Many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Acts 19:18-20

BAPTISM UNTO REPENTANCE NOT BAPTISM INTO CHRIST – R. 3152

ACTS 18:23-19:7

"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?" – Luke 11:13

AFTER leaving Corinth the Apostle completed his second missionary tour, and returned to Antioch, stopping en route at Jerusalem, where he greeted the Church and, no doubt, gave them an account of the Lord's blessing upon his recent ministries in Europe. Aquila and Priscilla went with the Apostle as far as Ephesus, and the vessel on which he traveled remaining over the Sabbath at the port, he improved the opportunity to speak for Christ in the synagogue of Ephesus. His discourse was no doubt in the nature of a preparation for a future work which he hoped to do there. He doubtless spoke only along the lines of first principles – respecting the glorious prophecies of Messiah, and the fulfilment which should now be expected. His discourse was well received, and he was urged to remain longer, and gave his promise of a later return.

We are not informed how long the Apostle remained at Antioch, but "after he had spent some time there he departed and went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples." While the Apostle was energetic in the establishment of new companies of the Lord's people, he was not slack in looking out for the spiritual welfare and growth of those which he had already established, as is evidenced by this statement – this being his third visit to these churches.

When the Apostle returned to Ephesus he found that in his absence a Christian brother named Apollos had come and had preached eloquently in the synagogue, using very close, logical and convincing arguments, and securing twelve converts to Christianity. He was a Jew, born at Alexandria, one of the chief cities of that time, specially noted for its schools of learning, and extensive libraries. The common version says that Apollos was "eloquent"; the revised version, that he was "learned", and the Greek word seems to be with equal propriety translatable either way: in all probability he was both learned and eloquent. However, he was not as thoroughly advanced in the knowledge of the Lord and of the truth as were Aquila and Priscilla who had for a time companied with the Apostle; and as soon as they heard Apollos in the synagogue they recognized him as a Christian brother, and took him to their own home, where they had good opportunity for communicating to him "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

We have here a beautiful illustration of how the Lord is pleased to use his consecrated people. He had use for the talents and education of Apollos; he had use also for the less talented Aquila and Priscilla who, though not qualified to speak in public in the synagogue, were, nevertheless, used of the Lord to bless his more eloquent disciple, and thus to be sharers with him in the fruits of his more public ministry. The same is true today, as the Apostle explains. (1 Cor. 12:12-26.) No member of the body of Christ can say that he has no need for another member, and no member may say that there is nothing whatever that he can do in the service of the body. Under the guidance of our glorious Head each member who is filled with his spirit, and desirous of serving him, may do so. When the time for rewards will come, who knows how much of the usefulness of Paul and Apollos may be accredited to some of the humble ones such as Aquila and Priscilla, who in various ways ministered to and encouraged and supported their abler brethren in the Lord's work. The Apostle mentions very tenderly some of this class who colabored with him, supporting his work by their influence and by their means. (Phil. 4:3.) Similar opportunities are still open, and no child of the Lord should

let the days of the present harvest time go by with their golden opportunities for service and cooperation without seeking each day to lift the royal banner himself, and to publicly show forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into light, or by assisting and cooperating with others whom the Lord in his providence has placed in more advantageous positions for public service.

Apollos, hearing from Aquila and Priscilla of the glorious work accomplished by the Apostle Paul at Corinth, went thither, taking with him a letter of introduction from his newly found friends at Ephesus, who had so recently left Corinth. Incidently we are told that his going to Corinth proved a blessing to the Church there, because of his thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures and his ability in expounding them, so that he could "forcefully confute the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." That the Corinthian brethren were greatly pleased with the masterful ability of Apollos as a teacher of the truth is implied by the fact that some of them were disposed to say that they were followers of Apollos, while others, also sectarian in spirit, claimed to be followers of Paul, and others of Peter – all of which sectarianism the Apostle distinctly reproved subsequently in his epistle to them. – 1 Cor. 3:3-7.

There is room for all the ability of all the brethren in the Church, and such a thing as rivalry or partisanship is entirely out of place. We have one Lord, one Head: we all are brethren, and our highest aim should be to honor our Head and serve the fellow-members; and each one who so endeavors should be highly esteemed, whether his talents are greater or smaller than those of others. Another lesson here is the importance of being well versed in the Scriptures. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God, and he who would serve the cause best must know how to use this weapon which the Lord himself has provided – forcefully, convincingly and yet lovingly. The Scriptures with which Apollos was familiar were the Old Testament writings, since the New Testament was not yet compiled, though doubtless a few of its books had already been written. Whether Apollos had seen these or not, he had from some quarter "been instructed in the way of the Lord," before meeting Aquila and Priscilla, and was now, through them, still more thoroughly furnished for his ministry of the truth. Let us each resolve that by the Lord's grace we will put on the entire Christian armament, supplied us by the Lord, not neglecting the sword of the spirit – the Word. Let us learn, too, to be ready however humble may be the channels through which he may send it to us. Humility is one of the graces highly esteemed by the Lord, and one of the points upon which he frequently tests his followers: "Except ye become as little children [teachable, guileless], ye shall in nowise enter the Kingdom of heaven."

It was while Apollos was at Corinth that the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus, according to promise, and began a ministry there which lasted two years (19:10). Aquila and Priscilla had seemingly left Ephesus by this time, as they are not again mentioned; but the Apostle speedily found those whom Apollos' ministry had reached, twelve in number. (Vs. 7.) Our Common Version would seem to give the inference that the Apostle was surprised that these believers at Ephesus had not yet received gifts of the holy spirit. But not so; he merely wished to bring to their attention the fact that such gifts were possible to them, for only an apostle could convey the gifts of the holy spirit, as we have already seen. (Acts 8:14-17.) The preaching of Apollos was merely along the lines of first principles of the doctrine of Christ, represented in the baptism of John to the Jews, while these believers were, evidently, by nature Gentiles.

Apollos had explained the gospel merely to the extent of repentance from sin and faith in Christ as the Redeemer. He had no knowledge of the fuller meaning of baptism as explained by the Apostle (Rom. 6:3-5) – a baptism of consecration, to suffer with Christ – to be dead

with him, to participate in his resurrection to the new nature and to be ultimate sharers with him in the heavenly Kingdom. The Apostle explained to them this "mystery" of fellowship with the Messiah – participation in his sufferings, and by and by in his glory (Col. 1:26,27): and when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus – as members of his body, to fellowship in his sufferings, even unto death.

How many believers there are today who, like these described, are members of "the household of faith," but not members of "the body of Christ" – who have gone so far as a baptism of repentance and reformation, and faith in the Redeemer, but who have not been instructed respecting the great privileges which belong to this dispensation – that we may become "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together!" Wherever we go, let us each seek by the grace of God to explain the way of the Lord more perfectly to these already partially indoctrinated ones. So long as there are a plenty of such to labor with, it would be unwise, yea, contrary to our covenant and commission, to specially devote our lives and energies to the world; for although we are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, it is to be chiefly to the household of faith. All around us, in the churches of the various denominations, are, we believe, hundreds, yea, thousands, who are in the condition of these mentioned in the lesson, knowing only the ***baptism of repentance***, knowing not the ***baptism of Christ*** – the baptism into his death, the baptism of full consecration. Let us be diligent in this highest department of the work of the ministry, feeding, instructing, the Lord's flock.

After instructing them thus respecting the true baptism, and after performing upon them its water symbol, the Apostle laid his hands on the believers and they received the holy spirit – that is to say, the "gifts of the spirit" were manifested in them – they spake with tongues, prophesied, etc., as described in 1 Corinthians 12. We have no power to communicate such gifts today, nor have others this power. It was an apostolic power, not transferable to others, as it was not the Lord's intention that those gifts should remain with the Church, but merely should be a witness in its infancy period; – until the New Testament writings should be within reach, and until the fruits of the spirit could be developed.

However, let none envy the primitive Church this special blessing, so necessary to its progress and joy; but remember that under the Lord's providence our conditions in some respects are still more favorable, in that we have the written Word for our admonition. Let us remember the testimony of the Apostle in our last lesson, too, – to the effect that faith, hope and love, ***fruits*** of the spirit, far excel the tongues and interpretations and miracles of the ***gifts*** of the spirit: so that, as he explained, if one had all these gifts, and lacked the one fruit of love, he would be "nothing"; – it would profit him nothing as respects a share in the body of Christ, and in the glorious blessings, present and future, which belong to it.

Our Golden Text evidently refers, not to the miraculous gifts of the spirit enjoyed by the primitive Church, but to the holy spirit, or disposition, "the mind of Christ," the common privilege of all who are baptized into Christ's death, and who seek by faith to walk in newness of life. The miraculous gifts of the primitive Church could come only through apostolic hands; but the spirit, in the sense that we still enjoy it, the mind of Christ, the mind of God, with all the fruits and graces thereof, is still the privilege of the Lord's people, and dependent not upon apostolic or other hands, but upon our heavenly Father and upon the zeal with which we seek by prayer and every endeavor to have his mind, his disposition, controlling our thoughts, our words, our conduct. It is God's good pleasure to give us this spirit of love; but he gives it only to those who desire and seek it with patient perseverance.

ASIA HEARD THE WORD OF THE LORD – R. 4420

ACTS 18:23: 19:22

"The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." – Acts 19:17

OUR present lesson connects up St. Paul's experiences during a period of about two years and a half. He left Corinth probably six months after writing his letter to the Thessalonians, journeying to Jerusalem, determined, if providence permitted, to attend the next feast of Passover in the Holy City – not the Jewish feast, of course, but the substitute; as St. Paul explains, "Christ our Passover is slain; therefore let us keep the feast." (1 Cor. 5:7.) With the Apostle traveled Aquilla and Priscilla, who were about to make Ephesus their home. St. Paul himself stopped there briefly and, according to his custom, went into the synagogue and addressed the Jews. He was well received and urged to remain, but he hastened onward, promising, if possible, to return.

When he did return on his third missionary journey he made a two-year stop at Ephesus, one of the principal cities of the world at that time, reputed to have been next to Athens in its culture and art and surpassing it in painting. Its temple of Diana was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. Thus it was a religious city after the heathen ideal.

INSTRUCTED HIM MORE PERFECTLY

After St. Paul was gone from Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a convert to Christianity, came there and preached Christ with considerable boldness, knowing only the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, which was for the Jews only. Aquilla and Priscilla were attracted to this eloquent man and privately instructed him in the way of the Lord more perfectly, more fully explaining to him, doubtless, respecting the Pentecostal blessing and the unction of the holy Spirit possible to all believers. Their course was commendable in that they did not publicly oppose Apollos but appreciated the work that he was doing and sought to assist him to a more complete, a more thorough ministration of the Gospel. It is the word spoken in season, not only the proper word, but in the proper manner, that the Lord is pleased to bless and to own. Let us each remember this and seek and pray to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in the dispensing of the bread of life.

Evidently Apollos had not been sufficiently convinced to lead him to attempt a further elaboration of the Gospel, and so when St. Paul returned for his stay of two years at Ephesus he found certain Christian brethren there earnest but lacking certain of the usual evidences of that time – the holy Spirit as a gift, as a power to speak with tongues, to heal, etc. Considering the case peculiar he inquired whether they had not received the holy Spirit since believing. The reply was that they had never understood it. Apollos had not taught them; and Aquilla and Priscilla, although clear in the matter themselves, had not been recognized as authoritative teachers. They were very ready to be taught of St. Paul, however, and gladly received his message and further demonstration of the Gospel. St. Paul directed that they be baptised again because the baptism which they had received was merely John's baptism for remission of sins. That was not sufficient for these men, because they were by nature Gentiles, and John's baptism was only for the Jews. Hence St. Paul directed that they be baptized afresh with the correct understanding – first, that they be justified, and second that baptism meant to them an immersion into the Body of Christ as members. Following the directions of the Apostle they were made sharers in the gifts of the holy Spirit.

HARDENED AND BELIEVED NOT

For three months the Apostle had liberty in

the synagogue amongst the Jews and used it in ably presenting Christ as the Fulfiller of the demands of the Law Covenant, the Messiah, the Redeemer, and the glorified Head of the Church, at whose Second Coming the promised Kingdom of God under the whole heavens would be established. "He spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the Kingdom of God." He did not stop to dispute heathendom nor to dispute Greek philosophies. He had a message from the Lord and delivered it – the message of the Kingdom, understood today by so very few of the Lord's dear people.

St. Paul testified that the Truth is a "savor of life unto life and of death unto death." Either it has a tender, a softening, a lubricating effect upon the mind and the life and the character, making it more loving and Christ-like, or, reversely, it has a hardening effect, an embittering effect, turning the opponent away from the Lord and his message. It does not surprise us that this was the effect at Ephesus; yea, and everywhere today, as well as then, wherever the Truth is spoken clearly, thoroughly, intelligently.

Today, Catholics can preach in Protestant Churches; so can Jews. Unitarians and Trinitarians, believers in Election and Free Grace, believers in something and believers in nothing, can all mingle in so-called Christian harmony and fellowship and without a thought of persecuting one another. Why? Because, while they differ one from the other, they have a sufficiency of error in harmony with each other to constitute a basis of agreement. The evidence of this is that as soon as the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth is proclaimed in their midst it is denounced by every one of them, opposed, slurred, falsified, vilified, lied about; and all associated with it come more or less under a social ban, a spirit of persecution. They do not like the savor of the Truth. To them it has an odor of death, of self-sacrifice, which is contrary to all of their hopes, aims and desires. Some of the opponents of the Truth today are hardening their own hearts by their attitude, just as did Pharaoh thirty-five hundred years ago, and just as did the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees eighteen centuries ago. We are sorry for them, but what can we do?

HE DEPARTED FROM THEM

When the opposition in the synagogue became unkind and bitter, malevolent, the Apostle departed, not from the city, which had not persecuted him, but from the synagogue, which was opposing his teaching. Here we have our suggestion also as to our own course. First we should be faithful to God; secondly, when our message is rejected, we should not stay to bore people with it, but go to those who have an "ear to hear." We should "preach the Gospel to the meek."

Tyrannus had a school near the synagogue which, under the Lord's providence, by rental or in some other manner, became available as a preaching place for the proclamation of the Word, and St. Paul used the opportunity faithfully for about two years. The result was that from Ephesus "the gateway of Asia Minor," or, as it is sometimes called, "The eye of Asia," the Word of the Lord was carried to various cities by the traveling public, including Jews and proselytes.

We remember that some two years before this St. Paul had endeavored to go into Asia Minor; but, "the Spirit suffered him not," is the explanation of his not going. The time for the message to reach Asia Minor had not yet arrived. How evidently God knows the conditions; not only the conditions most favorable for the character development of his faithful Apostle, but also the times and seasons most suitable for his own work in every place, including the arrangements of matters so as to draw out the various epistles which for centuries have proven so great value to the Household of Faith!

MIRACLES BY THE HANDS OF ST. PAUL

When we think of the gifts of the Spirit conferred upon this great Apostle, the gifts of tongues, healing, etc., we appreciate these evidences that he was a servant of God, yet these do not arouse our highest esteem. Accepting them as of the Lord we nevertheless appreciate still more highly as from the same source his gift of interpretation of the Divine Plan of the Ages, his elucidation of the philosophy of the same, his exposition of the types and the prophecies, his admonitions and exhortations along the lines of character-building. By these miracles through the pen of the Apostle, God has given us rich blessing – far more than natural sight and physical healing. Our faith has been made stronger, as well as our hope and our love for God and for the brethren.

There were evil spirits then, as there are today, the difference being that today such obsessed ones are styled insane and treated accordingly, whereas probably one-half of the inmates of the insane asylums are really obsessed of the evil spirits, whose brains are not physically disordered. As St. Paul, amongst other miracles, cast out evil spirits in the name of the Lord, some of his opponents claimed that he did so merely by hypnotic influence, and that others could do the same if they would. Carrying out the thought they attempted to exorcise an evil spirit, with disastrous results. They commanded the spirit to come out of the man in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached. But "the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped upon them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." As these opponents were prominent men the matter became generally known both to Jews and Greeks at Ephesus and the result was a spirit of reverence, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

BOOKS OF MAGIC, WITCH-CRAFT AND HYPNOTISM

We read that "many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds." They exposed the fact that many of their deeds were by occult or hidden power and injurious. They brought their books and burned them openly. They did not sell them to others and thus permit the evil influence to spread, but did their share towards its destruction. So should it be still. Those who turn to the Lord from darkness and sin should publicly confess the transformation of their hearts and lives and should destroy everything calculated to exercise an evil influence, either upon themselves or upon others. It is the thorough-going convert – converted from center to circumference – who has taken a radical stand for righteousness, as he previously took it for sin, that the Lord permits to honor him; and sometimes at the sacrifice of earthly interests. The testimony is, "So (thus) mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

The Apostle's diversified experiences as a servant of the Lord are remarkable. At the beginning of his ministry he was beset and persecuted in nearly every city, while subsequently, as we have seen, he was comparatively without persecution for nearly four years. Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Faith assures us that all of the steps of the Apostle were Divinely, wisely ordered. Perhaps he needed the rougher experiences at the beginning of his ministry to polish him, to prepare him for his further service, the writing of his epistles, etc. Doubtless we shall understand his experiences better, and our own experiences better, when, by and by, beyond the veil, we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known. Until then the Lord requires that we exercise faith and confidence in him, nothing doubting.

PAUL AT EPHESUS – R. 1558

ACTS 19:1-12

"When the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." – John 16:13

This lesson shows Paul a second time at Ephesus since leaving Corinth. In the interim (chap. 18:18-23) he had first spent a brief time here, where he was accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, and then visited Jerusalem, Antioch and the churches of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples. Now he has returned to find a pleasant surprise: A cultured and eloquent Alexandrian Jew, a convert to Christianity, has been here in his absence, mightily convincing the Jews, and that publicly, that Jesus is the Christ, and many have believed and are ready and anxious for further instruction.

Apollos himself knew only the baptism of John – the baptism unto repentance (the same now taught by the Disciples or Christian denomination – See last TOWER – Acts 18:25; 19:4), and they had been so baptized. Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak, and, perceiving his imperfect knowledge, took him home and instructed him more perfectly, so that when he went away from Ephesus to Achaia, he went better equipped for the work. The coming of the Apostle was just in time to encourage the infant Church and to correct the mistakes of the zealous and beloved Apollos. His inquiry and their reply, with reference to receiving the holy spirit, showed their entire ignorance of the privileges of believers – of entire consecration and adoption as sons of God into the divine family, implied in the ordinance of baptism into Christ. This subject of the high calling of believers, of the gospel age, Paul opened up to them, probably in quite extended discourse, of which **verse 4** must be understood as a mere synopsis. This clearer understanding was at once acted upon, and they were again baptized – not this time with the significance of John's baptism (unto repentance), but of Christ's baptism (of entire consecration and full submission to the will of God).

Then followed the evidence of their acceptance with God, granted to all the early Christians through the laying on of the Apostles' hands (never otherwise communicated, except at the beginning): the power of the holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (**Verse 6**.) These gifts were necessary to the Church then in its incipient stage, both for their own full assurance of faith, and also for the world's recognition of them as specially owned of God; but they were not intended to be continued beyond the days of the Apostles. – 1 Cor. 13:8.

VERSES 8-10. Paul continued his reasonings with the Jews in the synagogues three months, when, as usual, his advanced and clear teachings produced a division among the Jews, for and against the truth – the opposition of the unbelievers being very pronounced. He therefore, with the believers, withdrew, and thereafter taught in the school or lecture room of one Tyrannus. Here Jews and Greeks were alike welcome, and from this place the truth spread over all Asia Minor.

The lesson taught by the Apostle's course in thus ceasing to intrude upon the unbelieving Jews, who were no longer willing to give the truth a hearing in their synagogue, is one that all believers should note and follow. What communion hath light with darkness, or truth with error? After using such privileges as are freely accorded, if the truth has no effect, its servants are not justified by any Scripture in intruding upon the rights of others.

REFORMATION COSTING SACRIFICE – R. 3157

ACTS 19:11-20

"The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."

EPHESUS was in many respects the scene of the Apostle Paul's most successful work. He spent about three years there altogether, accompanied by Timothy, Erastus, Titus and, possibly, others. The influence of his work, either directly or indirectly, extended to other cities round about. It is supposed that it was during this stay at Ephesus that congregations were started in the nearby places, mentioned in Revelation as "the seven churches of Asia" (Minor). Our last lesson showed the Apostle beginning his work at Ephesus in the synagogue. He continued to present the truth until opposition to it became quite marked, and certain of the Jewish adherents began to speak evil of the teachings and of the believers. Then the Apostle and those who believed, unwilling to continue a condition of strife, discontinued their attendance at the synagogue, and began a separate meeting, apparently in a rented public hall, called "The School of Tyrannus," because, according to the custom of that time, it was used by him for this purpose in the forenoons.

The Apostle probably labored at his trade during the forenoon, and daily, during the afternoon, preached the message to such as had hearing ears, not only in the public hall, but also by visiting those whom he had reason to expect would be amenable to the gospel. We are supposing a continuance of his usual manner of life, described in his first letter to the Thessalonians (2:9), "Ye remember our labor and toil, working day and night." The Apostle did not belong to a paid ministry. He had a message to deliver, which he appreciated so highly that he was glad of an opportunity to spend his life in its promulgation – using for other purposes only so much of time and energy as were necessary to procure life's necessities, – waiting for the great reward which the Lord has promised to all faithful servants of his cause. The Lord's ambassadors today can take no better pattern than his, if seeking with him divine favor now, and glory, honor and immortality by and by.

Satan's arts, employed in all parts of the world from the earliest dawn of history, have been in the nature of wonder-workings, magic, etc. The Scriptures call our attention particularly to the magicians of Egypt, to the soothsayers of Babylon, and in this lesson show us that the same practises, the same wily arts of the Adversary, were general throughout the Roman Empire, and especially in the wealthy city of Ephesus. The Lord performed through the Apostle Paul, while at Ephesus, many marvelous healings of the sick, and other miracles, as well as the casting out of the evil spirits referred to in vss. 11 and 12, – doubtless as an offset to the blinding influence of witchcraft, magic, black art, etc. We may reason that the manifestation of divine power here was necessary to the establishment of the Church, and to the general influence of the gospel in that region – as an offset to the blinding influences of Satan's agents and power. The Ephesians were evidently so bound by these arts of the Adversary that an exhibition of him as the real father of them was almost indispensable. Besides, the miracles wrought by Paul served as an endorsement of him as an apostle; an endorsement of his message of Jesus, the Redeemer; of a resurrection as a means of rescue from death, the wages of sin; of a Millennial Kingdom as the means, or channel through which that rescue would come; and of the calling out of the Church as the body of Christ, to constitute that Kingdom, when, in due time, complete and glorified.

Perceiving the Apostle's power to be greater than their own, certain of the magicians essayed to use the name of Jesus as a charm or magic word, just as they were in the habit of

using other magic words in their incantations. The effort of some of these, sons of one of the principal priests, resulted disastrously to them, and beneficially to many others. Addressing the one possessed of an evil spirit, they demanded that the evil spirit leave the vexed one, "in the name of Jesus whom Paul preacheth," as distinguished from others of the same name, for the name was at that time a common one. The demon not only did not obey the command, but using the possessed one, and exercising through him demoniacal strength, the seven men were wounded and put to flight, losing, at least, their outer garments.

This matter becoming widely known, was a convincing argument to those who had long had confidence in such wonder-workers, and proved to them that the Apostle's teachings were correct – that the black arts were of Satan, while the Apostle's miracles were of divine power. The resulting increase of interest in the truth shows us clearly that the people were previously duped and unable to discern the true message of God from the spurious teachings of Satan. This reminds us of the Apostle's words, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4.) We may safely conclude that the same general principle prevails throughout the whole heathen world today, and to a considerable extent, also, amongst Christian people – that the alienation of many, and their opposition to God and his message through the truth are probably to be accredited more to ignorance than to evil preferences. How blessed is the assurance that ere long the Lord's power shall be exercised not only a little, as in the case under consideration at Ephesus, but universally, to the complete binding of Satan that he may deceive the nations no more until the thousand years of Christ's reign have accomplished their designed work of opening all the blind eyes, and permitting all who will to come back into full fellowship with God. – Rev. 20:2,3.

The statement of vs. 18 is capable of two constructions: we might consider it as referring to those who practised magic, and understand it to signify that they confessed certain deceptions connected with their practises, and showed their deeds, – how certain tricks had been performed; or, (and we think preferably) the words may be understood to mean that many believers confessed the truth, and publicly showed it in the reform of their conduct. The latter view is supported by the statement of vs. 19, which seemingly refers to the whole number of believers, declaring that "not a few of them that practised curious arts brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all." – R.V.

Satan's method of enslaving mankind seems to have been, from the first, largely through superstition. Gross superstition and darkness still dominate the great mass of mankind, and even where the blessed light of the gospel lamp has gone, reproving the darkness, and setting forth the true way of life and blessing, the Adversary has been enabled to follow, and more or less to attach superstitious rites and ceremonies, to the gross delusion of many known as civilized. We cannot doubt that the Adversary is connected with many performances done in the name of Christian religion and with many of the miracles wrought by "holy nails," "bones," etc., etc., and is generally effective in holding the deluded ones back from the study of the Lord's Word, and an understanding of the great plan of salvation therein so clearly set forth.

The readiness of the Adversary to use now any and every means available to hinder the light of truth, or to turn aside those who have already discerned it, is very manifest. Almost without exception, all the various persons and systems performing the "many wonderful works" (Matt. 7:22) of today, directly or indirectly antagonize the truth; – the ransom itself, the substitution of the life of our Redeemer for the life of the world, is generally ignored, if

not totally denied by them. We are inclined to think that much of the mind-healing and hypnotism, coming rapidly into popularity, are merely adaptations of our old enemy to the new conditions of our day.

We have every reason to believe that the Adversary would be willing to use the black arts today, as in times past, in proportion as conditions would be favorable; and incantation, by repeating certain seemingly meaningless words, is still practised by some; also the making of peculiar stews and broths, which are supposed to have magical powers, affecting love, hatred, etc., and the wearing of charms, the making of the sign of the cross in the presence of danger, etc., to protect from evil.

Such mispractises and misbeliefs assuredly have the effect of holding their victims in the bonds of superstition, hindering them from the proper exercise of the true faith in the almighty power of God, by filling their minds with errors and superstitions. Even brethren who have received present truth are not exempt from the Adversary's besetments along this line. A number have written us regarding their deliverance from the snares of spiritism, and one came very nearly being entangled in the black art. He wrote us in substance, thus: –

"Dear Brother Russell: – You will rejoice with me, I am sure, that our heavenly Father has been pleased to give me a special and remarkable gift of healing in connection with one disease – every case that I have treated since I received the gift has resulted in a cure. It requires but a few moments in each case, the repeating of a few words. I make no charge for the service, as I am glad of the privilege of doing good in any manner to my fellow-creatures."

We responded to this, that we were glad to know of the Lord using any of his people in any manner; nevertheless, we felt curious to know what were the words used in this simple and effectual operation, and, hence, inquired for the formula. The reply came that the formula of words, etc., necessary to the performance of the cure could not be communicated from one man to another, but only from a woman to a man, and from a man to a woman – a peculiar restriction, to say the least, to apply to anything good. Upon giving the name of a lady to whom the formula could be sent, we received it, and found that it was simply magic, – the using of a few meaningless words in connection with a piece of string.

We wrote the brother at once, that we believed the cures he had been performing were not of the Lord, but of the evil One, and advised that he discontinue them. He responded, thanking us, and assuring us that it had never occurred to him that a work of healing could be accomplished by any other than divine power, but that in the light of our suggestions he saw to the contrary, and would use it no more. However, the fame of his cures already performed brought him many applications from others in the same distress, who were indignant when he refused to go to their relief for either love or money; and upon his explaining that he believed the power he had used was of Satan they declared that they did not care, so long as the relief could be had. To what lengths the Adversary may carry his delusions in this day and by uptodate methods, we cannot surely know; but our expectation certainly is that his delusions will be numerous, and of the kind that would "deceive, if it were possible, the very elect," as our Lord foretold.

The sincerity of some of the converts at Ephesus was manifested by the public burning of the books in which were recorded the various magic words, and receipts, by which incantations could be made, affecting and counteracting various of the ills of life. All books at that time were precious, as they were made of skins instead of paper, and pen-printed instead of printed by type; but these books were specially high-priced because each possessor of a copy was interested

in restricting the information and, hence, unwilling to permit the copying of his book. Viewed from this standpoint, the number of books would not necessarily be very great to amount to the considerable figure specified – 50,000 pieces of silver – about $8,500, a piece of silver representing about 17 cents of our money. But, if we remember that each piece of silver represented a day's wages, it might be considered equivalent to at least $1, in our day, and thus the total value of the books would be $50,000.

This considerable sum was freely sacrificed to the Lord and to the truth; – not that the Lord accepts as sacrifices any evil thing, such as those books were, but that the destruction of the books, representing a considerable value, represented also a sacrificing condition of heart. The books had a commercial value, and could have been sent to some other city and sold for a large sum, but this would have been spreading the evil which they were recognized as representing, and we note with pleasure that they who gave up the books were unwilling to sell them, and thus risk injuring others, nor did the Apostle suggest that the books might be sold and the money turned into useful channels in the service of the gospel. The Lord's people are never to do evil that good may follow. We are reminded of a liquor dealer, who pursued a different course; – concluding that his business was dishonoring to the Lord's cause and injurious to his fellowmen, he determined to abandon it; but instead of destroying the liquor by emptying it into the sewers, he sold it. We may be sure that he failed to get the great blessing which evidently came upon the more proper disposal of the evil things, narrated in this lesson.

The Lord is not poor; all the gold and silver are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. It is not necessary, therefore, to his cause that we shall put into it anything that in any sense or degree represents evil. In our opinion those who burned the books on "black art" were not only more blessed themselves, but they more honored the Lord and more advanced his cause, by such heroic treatment, than if they had sold the books and put the money into the treasury of the Lord. Everything throughout the Scriptures seems to teach that the Lord specially loves and appreciates those who are thorough-going, not only in their zeal for righteousness and truth, but also in their opposition to that which is unrighteous and erroneous.

We believe that the same principle applies to the sale of books which inculcate Satan's lies, and we recommend that if the Lord's people have books of this kind, black with false doctrines, misrepresenting the divine character and plan, they would do far better to burn them, to put them where they will not endanger others, than to sell them and to give the proceeds to the Lord's work.

With such a spirit prevailing amongst the believers – such a willingness to give up things contrary to the Lord, and that at a cost to themselves, involving, no doubt, a change of occupation, we cannot wonder at the statement of the last verse of the lesson, that "so the word of the Lord Jesus grew mightily and prevailed" over the evil influences opposing it. So it will surely be with the Lord's people today; where the proper zeal for the Lord and for righteousness are in the hearts of his people, the effect will be telling upon all with whom they come in contact.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED AT EPHESUS – R. 2206

ACTS 19:21-34

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness." – Luke 12:15

THIS lesson stands related to the history of Paul's evangelistic service amongst the Gentiles, connecting with our lesson dated August 1; and the intervening verses should be considered. Leaving Corinth, the Apostle made a short stop at the important city of Ephesus, parting there with Aquila and Priscilla who accompanied him that far. He proceeded to Jerusalem that he might be in time for the feast of the Passover, purposing no doubt a visit with the Church there, amongst whom were several of the apostles and James our Lord's brother. The account of the visit to Jerusalem is briefly summed up by Luke in the statement that Paul "saluted the Church." (Acts 18:22.) Apparently, the reception accorded the great Apostle was a rather cool one, the believers there having not yet learned so thoroughly as had Paul that but a "remnant" would be gathered from the Jews, and the remainder of the elect Church be selected from the Gentiles. Cannon Farrar makes a remark on this visit by Paul to Jerusalem which is well worth repeating; he says, –

"Had James and the circle of which he was the centre, only understood how vast for the future Christianity would be the issues of these perilous and toilsome journeys, . . . with what affection and admiration would they have welcomed him? So far from this, St. Luke hurries over the brief visit in three words that he 'saluted the Church;' . . . there is too much reason to fear that his reception was cold and ungracious; that even if James received him with courtesy, the Judaic Christians who surrounded 'the Lord's brother' would not; and even that a jealous dislike of that free position towards the Law, which he established amongst his Gentile converts, led to that determination upon the part of some of them to follow in his track and to undermine his influence, which, to the intense embitterment of his later days, was so fatefully successful. It must have been with a sad heart, with something even of indignation at this unsympathetic coldness, that St. Paul hurriedly terminated his visit. But none of these things moved him."

Oh, how much some of the "brethren" missed it, when they failed to recognize the leading of the Lord's providence in connection with the work of the Apostle Paul. John-Mark, as we have already seen, and afterward his uncle Barnabas failed to see their great privilege in being co-workers together with that servant whom the Lord was pleased specially to use in the presentation of the gospel message at that time. And afterward we note how some "false apostles," not sent on any such errand, followed the Apostle into various cities where he by the Lord's grace had planted the truth and there sought, and to some extent succeeded, in overturning his work – "teaching the people that they should keep the Law of Moses," etc. But we are not to understand that they really did injury to the Lord's work; for the Lord himself is behind his own work. Their teachings served as siftings to draw off those who were not Israelites indeed, and who had not received the perfect Law of liberty through Christ. And they gave occasion for the writing of certain parts of Paul's epistles to counteract these errors, which have proven a blessing and a great help to the Lord's people for the eighteen centuries since. Thus does the Lord overrule the work of evil for good to those who love him and who are in the proper attitude of heart to be "taught of God." – See 2 Cor. 11:13; Gal. 2:4; 5:4.

Returning to Ephesus the Apostle remained there for three years, finding it an excellent field from which the influence of the gospel would radiate through all Asia-Minor. Ephesus was one of the most important cities of that time, its population being chiefly Greeks. It

was called "one of the eyes of Asia." It had a colosseum or place for public gatherings, capable of accommodating fifty thousand people, and one of its chief attractions was an immense and grand temple erected to the honor of the goddess Diana, and it was the centre of her cult, whose influence and numbers extended throughout all Asia-Minor. The temple was built of the purest marble: the historian says of it: –

"It was 425 feet long and 220 broad; its columns of Parian marble were 60 feet high, and 36 of them were magnificently carved. The porticoes in front and rear consisted each of 32 columns; the entire number of columns, 127, being given each one by a king. The hall was adorned with the most wonderful statuary and paintings."

From this description we readily see that the character of the idolatry with which the Apostle had to contend was very widely different from that of the South Sea Islanders. Its majestic temples were not out of harmony with its priesthood and general features, all of which were evidently on an impressive scale, quite in harmony with its devotees, – intelligent and cultured people, as the Ephesians were.

The account shows that in the interim of Paul's visit to Jerusalem the Lord prepared the way at Ephesus for the greater work of the three years' ministry which followed; for Apollos had in the meantime visited Ephesus, – mighty in the Scriptures as far as he understood them, but "knowing only the baptism of John" unto repentance, and faith in Christ as the Messiah. Apollos, apparently had not learned particularly respecting the new dispensation, and the gifts of the spirit by which it was being introduced. But Aquila and Priscilla, altho not themselves gifted so as to be able to speak in public, hearing of Apollos and his good work, sought him out, invited him to their home and there found quiet opportunity for imparting to him a clearer knowledge of the new dispensation: thus they became sharers in the fruits of his subsequent efficiency.

When Paul arrived at Ephesus Apollos was gone, but some whom he had interested were soon found and instructed respecting the gifts of the holy spirit; then being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus they received some of the gifts. The real baptism of consecration to the Lord Jesus as his servants, was no doubt part of the Apostle's explanation; but this was followed by instruction with reference to baptism in water, and these brethren, twelve in number, being of proper and teachable spirit, were not only willing but anxious to render obedience to every feature of the divine will; and having by their immersion in water publicly confessed Christ and themselves as his servants "dead with him," they were blessed with a share of the gifts, some of which were granted to every believer in that time; – as we have already seen in the lesson preceding.

As usual, wherever the truth is preached there is a division; not merely a division as between those who respect God and his Word and those who deny the true God, but further than this, amongst those who acknowledge the true God and the Scriptures; – a division respecting Christ, and especially respecting the work of Christ, the value of the cross and the blessings which now and hereafter shall flow therefrom, to the blessing ultimately of all the families of the earth. The Apostle was not surprised at the division; he expected it. He doubtless remembered the Lord's words, "I am not come to send peace but a sword" and to cause division: it was better that the sincere followers of Christ should meet by themselves than that they should meet with others whose opposition to the truth would make continual disturbance, or else hinder their advancement into further knowledge and grace. It was for this reason that the Apostle secured, probably by hire, for use on certain occasions for meetings, the school-room of Tyrannus.

Ephesus was a great city for magic, incantations, divinations, etc. The worship of Diana and the delusions connected therewith, "black art," etc., were (like all the heathen

religious practices) devices of Satan and the fallen angels, whereby the people were made to believe in the power of Diana for good and evil, for health and sickness, for safety or accident. A vessel going to sea in order to have a prosperous journey it was thought must have on board a miniature "shrine of Diana." The individual who wished for luck repeated certain words or prayers to Diana and wore upon his breast a charm or amulet marked with her likeness or with a prayer to Diana (much after the manner that Roman Catholics wear upon their bosoms what are termed "scalpel," blessed with prayers to the Virgin Mary, with holy water, masses, etc.). As we have already seen,* the powers of darkness (Satan and the fallen angels) have liberty and ability to perform wonders of certain kinds under certain circumstances, just as Jannes and Jambres had power from the same source as recorded in Exodus 7:11. In consequence we are not surprised that the Lord greatly blessed the Apostle Paul in Ephesus with powers of the holy spirit which enabled him to more than meet the powers of darkness. The record is, "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul: so that from his body were brought handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." This naturally attracted the attention of all classes to the gospel which Paul preached, and to the power of God which was with him – whose manifestation was so different from the power which was with the workers of magic and incantations. The attempt of certain vagabond Jews to do the same miracle of casting out demons, using the name of Paul, their failure and the fact that they were worsted, the demons having no respect for them, helped to convince some respecting the gospel, – the very object intended by the Lord in the giving of "gifts."

*See "*Spiritism – Demonism*" in our issues June 15 to July 15.

"Many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their evil deeds [acknowledging that their works of magic were evil and from

Paul preaching at Ephesus

an evil source]. Many of them also which used curious arts [magic] brought their books together, and burned them before all." And when we are informed that the value of those books was 50,000 pieces of silver, estimated to be $9,300 in our money – but if calculated in proportion to the rate of wages then and now, equivalent to a very much larger sum – it will be manifest that the work of grace was moving mightily in Ephesus. When the gospel so takes hold upon the lives of believers that they are willing not only to abandon evil ways, but to destroy the instruments of evil which previously had brought them gain, it proves that it is a genuine work and not a mere emotion. It is worthy of note also that these believers did not sell their books and merely go out of business of evil, but destroyed them, lest the work of evil should propagate itself further through this agency. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed." – Acts 19:20.

With this connection we are the better enabled to understand the opposition which now arose; and why those who were engaged in making small images of Diana, and miniature copies

of the temple, and charms, and amulets, and "Ephesian spells" should become so excited and realize that their craft was endangered, not only in Ephesus but throughout all Asia-Minor.

Having spent about three years in Ephesus, Paul's purpose of mind was to return again to Jerusalem after visiting the Churches of Berea, Thessalonica, Philippi and Corinth; and his courageous heart was meditating a visit to the City of Rome, the seat of empire, where the gospel would have an opportunity of reaching another intelligent class and be brought more particularly in contact with the governmental and military influences and perhaps be even more liable to provoke persecution than in his previous experiences; for Aquila and Priscilla had been expelled from Rome for being Jews: in harmony with this plan he sent two of his co-laborers before him into Macedonia.

But the Lord saw best to permit the adversary to raise up a persecution about this time, and, of course, Paul would in a large measure be the centre of it. This persecution was on strictly business lines. The manufacturers and workmen engaged in the producing of the images, amulets, charms, etc., of Diana, were gotten together by one of their craft, Demetrius, who pointed out to them that the progress of Christianity meant the destruction of their various trades and that now was the time to put a stop to it and to reenkindle amongst the people a fervor of sentiment for Diana. The scheme worked well, and soon a furor was created: the less intelligent masses being easily aroused by the cry, "Great is Diana."

It has been surmised that this riot occurred in May, the month of Diana's Festival, when usually there was the largest demand for the charms, amulets, etc., and that on this occasion business being less brisk than usual, the depression was laid to the charge of Christianity, whose influence was by this time considerable, and certainly every item of it in opposition to Diana. Ephesus was not only the shrine of Diana, but it was a great mercantile centre for Asia, as Corinth was for Greece, and the May Festival of Diana was accompanied by not only sacrifices in her temple and processions in her honor and prayers for her protection, but with these were associated wonderful displays in their theater or Colosseum, – gladiatorial combats, athletic feats, hippodrome races, etc. These drew people from far and near, and for a time, commercially, the city was a fair, and a large amount of business was done with the strangers. It was doubtless in order to have an opportunity of presenting the gospel to these multitudes from round about, that the Apostle delayed taking his journey into Macedonia until after the Feast of Diana.

Paul being the prominent leader in the promulgation of Christianity was of course the central figure against whom the rioters moved. It is supposed that he still made his home with Aquila and Priscilla and that the mob made directly for their lodgings: apparently, however they missed getting Paul, and as the next best thing took Gaius and Aristarchus, two of his co-laborers. It is probable that it was at this time that Aquila and Priscilla, as Paul's faithful friends, risked their lives in his protection, as intimated by the Apostle's statement in his epistle to the Romans (16:4) where he says of them that they "laid down their necks" for his life. When the mob got Gaius and Aristarchus they took them to the Colosseum (theater), the general place of rendezvous for large gatherings. Here Paul, full of courage, purposed to attempt to speak to the mob in defense of the Christian cause, but the Ephesian converts would not permit him, knowing better than he the vicious and unreasoning spirit of the superstitious lower classes of Ephesus.

When the mob got to the theater it was much confused, and of different opinions respecting the object of the gathering. Many of them evidently supposed that it was a tumult against the Jews, – a very likely mistake, since the Apostle and some of his co-laborers were

Jews, and since the common people would probably only distinguish Christians as being a Jewish sect. Realizing this the Jews put forward Alexander. (Probably Alexander the copper-smith, mentioned by the Apostle in 2 Tim. 4:14, possibly a convert to Christianity who subsequently apostatized. – 1 Tim. 1:20.) Alexander was put forward by the Jews evidently for the purpose of explaining to the mob that the Christians were ***renegade*** Jews, and that the Jews proper would thoroughly approve of and support their persecution as disturbers of the general peace; that the Jews in general were a commercial people, interested, therefore, in the festivities of Diana, and the associated business prosperity. However, the Lord did not permit so insidious an attack, Alexander not being permitted to speak.

The account here given is very brief, but is supplemented by the Apostle's own statement of the matter. (2 Cor. 1:8-10.) "Concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: Yea, we ourselves have had the answer of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raised the dead: who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver."

It was probably the intention of the ringleaders of the mob to have a "spectacle" in the Colosseum, – to have the Apostle cast into the arena to be devoured by the wild beasts in the presence of the multitude. The Apostle refers seemingly to this persecution saying, "If I have fought with beasts at Ephesus" (1 Cor. 15:32) which would imply that if he did not have a combat of the kind intended for him, it came so near being such a conflict that it amounted to practically the same thing so far as his trials were concerned; – or it is barely possible that he referred to the Ephesian mob itself, as "beasts" seeking his life.

Two important lessons to be drawn from this narrative are **(1)** that thorough conversion to the Lord means a thorough abandonment of evil, whatever the cost, the self-denial, financial or social. **(2)** That the love of money is the root of all evil and a frequent cause of opposition to the Lord's Word and plan.

These principles, at work eighteen centuries ago, are still the same, and exercise similar influences today. And this is the very object of the truth during this Gospel age, – to be a test of our love for truth, for righteousness, for God. Sufficient evil is still permitted to test the Lord's people, to prove who are "overcomers." Those who are fully the Lord's are ready to lay down everything in his service – the service of righteousness. Just as the converts in Ephesus were willing to burn their once highly esteemed and commercially valuable books on magic, so today those who become the Lord's are ready to change their business if they find it inconsistent with righteousness and truth; and to lay down even life itself in the service of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And there is a class today, like Demetrius and his fellow craftsman, who, as the Scriptures express it, "look every one to his own quarter for gain." It will be noticed that the business of Demetrius and his associates might be considered a ***religious business***, inasmuch as they were forwarders of the worship of Diana: and so it is with a certain class to-day who are financially identified with the worship of "the image of the beast." (Rev. 13:14-17.) These support various religious systems from which also they draw goodly compensation of honor, praise, titles, money and respect. These likewise often oppose the truth, and go as far as public sentiment and civil government will permit in opposing the truth and those who serve it, and in inciting opposition among the masses. Their reasons therefor are similar to those which influenced Demetrius and his companions; they realize that their "craft is in danger." It is for each individually to be on guard lest he be "led astray with the error of the wicked," and fall from his own steadfastness, and be found to fight against God either for financial interests or earthly ambition.

THE RIOT AT EPHESUS – R. 3159

ACTS 19:29-40

"The Lord preserveth the faithful." – Psalm 31:23

WHEN Paul had spent nearly three years at Ephesus he purposed going again to Jerusalem, but before doing so would visit the churches of Macedonia – Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica and Corinth. He sent two of his helpers, Erastus and Timothy, in advance. (2 Tim. 4:20; 1 Cor. 4:17-19.) It was this visit to Corinth that he evidently referred to in his epistle to them. (1 Cor. 16:1-4.) He proposed taking contributions from them to the poor in Jerusalem – not as seeking a gift, but as seeking evidence of their love for the Lord, in their desire to be helpful to the brethren at Jerusalem, who were chiefly poor, and greatly disadvantaged by their loyalty to the truth. Apparently also the Apostle was planning a later tour, which would include Rome – little suspecting that he would be sent to Rome as a prisoner.

About this time occurred the riot described in this lesson, which probably would have determined the Apostle to leave Ephesus, if he had not already purposed so doing. The Lord permitted persecutions to drive him out of every place – thus seemingly indicating the proper time for terminating his ministry at each point. The account says, "There arose no small stir about that way." Very evidently the "way" of the Lord's people differed decidedly from the ways of others, not as concerned their future hopes only, but also regarding their course in the present life. All things become new to those who receive the ***new mind*** of Christ; and although their "way" may seem to the unbelieving to be a narrow and troublesome one, to themselves it is the way of peace and joy and blessing and harmony with God, and, ultimately, the way of life eternal. And the way is the same to this day, as concerns those who are faithfully walking close to the Lord and to the teachings of his Word. The difficulty with many is that they have gotten out of the way – so that nominal church ways are, alas! too much like the ways of the world, with very similar hopes, aspirations and endeavors.

In Ephesus there were trades-unions or guilds, and Demetrius, the leader of the riot, belonged to the guild of the silversmiths – probably its president, or chief. There is a stone now in the British Museum which was found at Ephesus, on which is engraved an inscription concerning a certain Demetrius. It is said to belong to about the date of this lesson, between A.D. 50 and 60. The name occurs again in 3 John 12, where the Apostle mentions the person as a Christian of good report. Quite possibly the reference is to the person who led this riot, and who may afterwards have become an active Christian, as he was at this time an active opposer of Christianity, and a supporter of Diana; – even as Paul, the zealous persecutor of the Church, became its zealous servant. The probability that this was the same Demetrius is strengthened by the tradition that the Apostle John with Mary the mother of Jesus afterward made Ephesus their home.

Demetrius called together not only the men of his own craft, but those also of allied crafts. The finest of the shrines, or miniature temples of Diana, were made in silver, but others were made of inferior metals and of marble, and the cheapest of terra cotta. These shrines were manufactured of various sizes and in great quantities; not only for the people of Ephesus, but for export to various other cities and provinces where Diana was worshiped. The business was a profitable one, as Demetrius acknowledged; and it was upon the selfish instincts of the workmen engaged in this business that he based his strongest appeal, – that this Paul was turning away much people from the worship of Diana, not only in Ephesus but in the surrounding cities and provinces. His reasoning was that if the

Demetrius incites the crowd

people lost their respect for Diana and her temple, they would no longer purchase the shrines, and that the falling off in demand would mean loss for all engaged in the shrine business.

The argument of Demetrius inflamed the selfish sentiments of the allied crafts of shrine-makers – they became full of wrath, increasingly as the argument went on, and as they seemed to realize the ultimate discredit of Diana and ruin of their own business interests. They began to shout in a frenzied manner, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" doubtless inflaming themselves and others more and more with every shout, until a large mob collected, which they led toward the theater, or Coliseum, variously estimated to hold between twenty-five and fifty thousand people. As they went they seized two of Paul's companions, taking them along, as though intent upon bringing charges against them, and having them summarily dealt with. Paul, full of courage, would not have been willing to allow his companions to endure the brunt of this difficulty alone, but would have gone to them and endeavored to secure the attention of the mob and to reason with them; but leading men of the city, who were his friends, cautioned him, in the interests of peace, not to do this.

The uproar and excitement were intense, the majority not knowing certainly why they were there, but being in full sympathy with the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they surmised that some insult or opposition to their religion had occurred. It was for this reason that when Alexander, motioning to them for silence, endeavored to make a defense, the people, though they recognized him merely as a Jew, and not as a Christian, clamored so as to make it impossible for him to speak, realizing that all Jews were opposed to their goddess and her worship. The senselessness of their proceeding is clearly manifest in the fact that they kept up a meaningless shout for two hours! It is worthy of note here, that in proportion as people approach the proper conceptions of the divine character and plan and receive of the spirit of the Lord, in that same proportion they have greater soundness of mind. Consequently, we see that amongst Christians some who have made little growth in grace and knowledge are content to spend hours in shouting or talking about that which has comparatively little meaning; but in proportion as any grow in grace and knowledge they become partakers of the spirit of a sound mind, and correspondingly unwilling to waste either consecrated time or energy senselessly, unreasoningly. In other words, rejecting the wisdom of this world, and accepting the wisdom from above, they are as a result the more reasonable.

By this time the town clerk (or recorder or mayor, as we might term him) arrived, and quieted the people, and made them an address consisting of four arguments. First, he appealed to their patriotic sentiments; that they were citizens of a great city, and that people far and near recognized Ephesus as temple-keeper for Diana, and suggested that since this was so well established as a fact they

ought to do nothing rashly, for there could be no necessity for haste. Whatever might happen to Diana and Ephesus there certainly was no immediate danger. That temple of Diana was indeed a wonderful structure. Respecting it history says: "The crowning glory of Ephesus was the great temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. It glittered in brilliant beauty at the head of the harbor, and it was said that the sun saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana's temple. Made of the purest marble, it was 425 feet long, 220 broad. Its columns of Parian marble were 60 feet high, and 36 of them were magnificently carved. The hall was adorned with the most wonderful statuary and paintings."

The town clerk's second argument was that the men whom they had brought with them by violence, and against whom they seemed incensed, were not bad men – they had not been trying to rob Diana's temple, nor had they blasphemed the goddess herself. Very evidently the prominent men of the city, without accepting the gospel preached by the Apostle, had received favorable impressions of it, and realized that their teachings did not develop bad citizens, but that they were, on the contrary, amongst the most honorable, peaceable, law-abiding, of the city. His words give us another thought; viz., that the Apostle, in his preaching, did not specially attack the errors of heathendom – idolatry, etc., but that merely denying all other gods, he preached the one true God and his message of mercy, the gospel – the better "way." There is a lesson in this for the Lord's people to this day – "Go thou, and preach the gospel." Let others, if they will, smash the images and attack the various vices in and out of the nominal church systems. In preaching the gospel we shall have quite a sufficiency to do, so long as this present age continues.

The town clerk's third argument was that this was a quarrel of Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, and not a quarrel of the public in general; and that if any injustice had been perpetrated there was a proper channel of redress – the courts of law, attorneys, etc.

The fourth argument was that if this were not a dispute merely between Demetrius and his class and the propagators of Christianity – if the assembly had any other matter on which to charge them, they should bring them at the proper time, and in the lawful manner, when regular assemblages were had for the trying of cases. (Dr. Hovy remarks, "An inscription found in this very theater in which the words were uttered, illustrated their technical sense of the word 'lawful'. It provides that a certain silver image of Athene shall be brought and set at every (regular) assemblage, above the bench.") The town clerk pursued this last argument, pointing out that the meeting was nothing short of a riot, and that if it were reported to the Roman authorities and an inquiry made of him, it would reflect to the discredit of the city that such a turmoil had occurred without reason. His intimation was that there might be danger of the city losing a privilege which it had long enjoyed – of being a "free city." His speech shows clearly that even amongst the unbelievers of that time there were men of reasonably sound judgment.

Alas, that there are even today so many of the same disposition as Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen! The principal opponents of present truth are professed ministers of the gospel; and so far as we are able to discern, their opposition is inspired by the same selfish spirit which incited Demetrius and his associates – their craft is in danger – their salaries are endangered – respect for them and their teachings on the part of the people is endangered. It will not at all surprise us if ultimately their opposition to the truth shall lead to something analogous to this riot at Ephesus. Then we shall expect that they, like Demetrius, will not set forth the real secret of their opposition, but base it on the broader grounds of hostility of the truth to the great system of errors, misnamed "Orthodoxy," chiefly built by Antichrist, and known in the Scriptures as "Babylon."

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THEE" – R. 4432

ACTS 19:23; 20:1

"And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." – 2 Corinthians 12:9

FOR two years and three months St. Paul had actively engaged in the service of the Truth at Ephesus, the Gateway or Eye of Asia Minor. He was about ready to leave and had already sent word to the Churches enroute, which he had established, informing them of his journey and of the fact that a famine had recently prevailed in Palestine and that he purposed taking to the Christians at Jerusalem a present of money from their fellow-believers in the Gospel and fellow-members in the Body of Christ in Gentile lands. However, the Lord was pleased to permit the great Adversary to stir up persecution and riot against the Truth and especially against the Apostle just on the eve of his departure. As the Apostle declares, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to the called ones according to his purpose;" hence, we may be sure that God saw some good that could be accomplished by permitting this panic of persecution and that otherwise he would not have permitted it.

"FAITH MAY FIRMLY TRUST HIM, COME WHAT MAY"

Ephesus was one of the greatest cities of that time. This may be judged from the fact that just at the entrance of the harbor stood one of the "seven wonders of the world," an immense statue of "Diana of the Ephesians" – the deity of Ephesus and indeed of Asia Minor. To her shrine thousands of people came, as opportunity offered, believing that they received a special blessing from her, which affected favorably the prosperity of their homes. Her blessing was supposed to greatly increase the flocks and herds and the birth of children. Unlike the other (virgin) Diana, this one was represented to be the mother of all things living, fecundity being her special blessing. Of course, the fame of this great idol attracted general attention, and those who could not go to Ephesus to worship at the shrine of this image were pleased to purchase from merchants certain charms or amulets, which consisted of small copies of her shrine wrought in silver. The business of making these shrines grew as the people of that region learned to desire her blessing and to offer her worship. In the Apostle's day the business of making these shrines of various sizes out of silver was immense, employing hundreds, perhaps thousands.

A man named Demetrius was the representative or head of a silversmith's guild or union. He, becoming incensed against the propaganda of the Apostle and the early Church at Ephesus, aroused his fellow-craftsmen by a stirring speech, in which he pointed out the great prosperity of their city through this idol, and how they themselves had prospered by the making of her shrine. Then he painted a black picture of how the prosperity would shortly die, as a result of the preaching of this man Paul. He called attention to the fact that it was not merely at Ephesus that this new religion, opposed to the worship of Diana, was spreading, but that it prevailed throughout all Asia Minor amongst people who might be expected to place orders with them for shrines. With a wonderful cunning, he combined with this thought of the duty of supporting their city religion that of the duty also of looking out for their pocketbooks. Who can think of stronger grounds of argument with people in general? That he was successful in arousing the prejudices and creating a riot causes us no wonder. The whole city was in an uproar in the very tenderest spots, religion and worldly prosperity.

The Adversary, no doubt, helped on the matter, with the result that the people were shortly in a frenzy of despair, as though the feared collapse for their religion and their

prosperity were already upon them. The home of Paul was known; so thither the mob rushed, seeking the chief factor in the impending troubles. In the Lord's providence St. Paul was absent. Aquilla and Priscilla, who kept the home, were there and, although not arrested, evidently were loyal to the Apostle and to the cause to the very last degree. Thus the Apostle, subsequently writing respecting them, remarked that they endangered their necks for the sake of the Truth. As working people and home-keepers they were not molested; but two assistants of St. Paul found in the home were taken by the mob. They hurried them to the theatre, or place of public entertainment, whose capacity, we are told, was 56,000 persons, indicating that Ephesus must have been an immense city. St. Paul, learning of the commotion, would have courageously entered into the thick of the trouble in defense of his friends and, above all, in defense of his Master and his message. But wiser counsels prevailed and St. Paul remained away. The brethren suffered him not, believing that his presence would have accomplished nothing with people in so unreasonable a state of mind and St. Paul agreed with them, because no other course would have been the wise or proper one.

The Lord, however, did not neglect the two brethren who were arrested, Gaius and Aristarchus. The town clerk came to their assistance and with words of wisdom dispersed the mob. This official was not interested in the Gospel of Christ and its service, but he was interested in the doing of his duty as an officer of the city. He pointed out to the mob that they had become unduly excited; that they and everybody knew the greatness of Diana, and that one Jew or many Jews could not injure her great fame. And then he concluded, Seeing that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet and to do nothing rash, for ye brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. If, therefore, Demetrius or his companion have any matter against these men, the law courts are open. Let them accuse one another. In other words, let us mind our own business and not allow ourselves to be unduly excited over a matter of no moment. Besides, he pointed out to them that, while there were lawful assemblies provided for them, the present one was an unlawful one, which if it were reported to the Government at Rome, might bring disrespect to the city and perhaps cause it to lose some measure of its eminence. With this he dismissed the assembly.

PRINCIPLE AND LACK OF PRINCIPLE

Notice the contrast between the chief actors in the account of this lesson and those mentioned in the preceding one. In that case many people, realizing that they had been working in conjunction with the powers of evil – of demons – brought their books of magic, etc., and burned them, as a result of the influence of the Gospel message upon their hearts. They not only stopped the practice of the black art; they not only refused to use the books of magic; but they refused to sell them to others, lest they should do injury to them. They were willing, glad, to suffer financial loss and be thought foolish by their neighbors, rather than to do injury to others, after they had come to a true realization of the situation. On the contrary, the chief actors in this lesson were moved to a frenzy and to riotous conduct by their love of money – their fear lest they should suffer loss. Evidently it was not their respect for religion, but their love for filthy lucre which prompted their actions. Moreover, the religion of this goddess was a demoralizing one. Hence we see the stronger contrast between those who raised a riot in order to perpetuate idolatry and sensuality and to bring money to their own purses and those, on the contrary, who are ready to sacrifice their earthly interests rather than do harm, and in order that they may do the more good. Verily there is a power, a wonderful power, in the religion of Jesus, our Redeemer.

It is to be noted that the Apostle and his co-laborers were not guilty of the charge of which they were accused – blaspheming the

goddess of Ephesus. Here we have a point of importance and a valuable lesson. St. Paul elsewhere said, "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer nor as a busy-body in other men's matters." It was not necessary for the Apostle to say one unkind word in reference to the goddess Diana. His commission was to preach the good tidings of great joy – not to quarrel with false gods, or their worship. The persecution was therefore for right-doing. There is a lesson here for us, too. It is not necessary for us to do or say a single unkind word or act towards our friends in Babylon. It is not necessary for us to tirade against their systems or doctrines. We have plenty to do in setting forth the Gospel message. Of course, the Apostle did not fail to call attention to the fact that Diana was merely the work of men's hands and not, as claimed, a divinity. So we may properly enough set forth to our friends that there is but the one true Church, which was organized by our Lord, established at Pentecost, and that all other churches, therefore, are merely human systems. But it is not our privilege to tirade against these churches, as we learn some of the dear friends are inclined to do. The command, "Speak evil of no man," may properly be applied also to religious systems. Particularly those who recognize the foundation of Christianity in the redeeming merit of the death of Christ, and that favor and teach morality, if nothing more, should be let alone by us. In Divine providence the appointed hour will come, the Scriptures assure us, when everything which can be shaken will be shaken and overthrown in the great "time of trouble." Against that evil day we warn men that they repent and develop meekness and righteousness; "it may be that they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." Undoubtedly the Lord has permitted sectarianism for some wise purpose, even as he has permitted the Gentile governments to hold sway until the end of the times of the Gentiles. Let us not interfere with the fulfillment of the Divine purposes. Let us be content to fulfil our mission of assisting the brethren, building them up in the most holy faith and telling the good tidings to the meek and such as manifest an ear to hear.

THE LESSON OF OUR GOLDEN TEXT

This is a wonderful text. Our Lord's words therein expressed applied, we may be sure, not only to St. Paul, but to all of us who are of the one Body and energized by its one spirit. Doubtless St. Paul's experiences in connection with his thorn in the flesh were given to him and recounted in the Scriptures largely for the benefit of ourselves and of all who, from his day until now, have been suffering under peculiar experiences, trials, whose necessity and value were not clearly discerned.

When St. Paul, blinded by the great light which accompanied his conversion, finally received the Lord's forgiveness and the restoration of his sight in considerable measure, he doubtless bore patiently with the continued weakness of his eyes, considering it a proper chastisement for his wrong course as an opponent of the Anointed One and an injurious person in respect to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The measure of his afflictions which remained helped the Apostle, doubtless, to appreciate very distinctly how close is the relationship between the Church and her Lord, as members of the one sacrifice, as explained in the Lord's Words, "Why persecutest thou me?"

However, as weeks and months and years passed, and the Apostle found his defect of vision a great burden, he doubtless wondered why the Lord should permit any measure of the ailment to continue. Well did he know that it would be as easy for Divine power to give him perfect sight as not. Indeed, he had evidence along this line continually – the power of God in healing the sick – so that handkerchiefs and napkins which he had blessed were sent for from far and near, and carried with them Divine blessing and healing. Evidently the Apostle reasoned that after he had suffered awhile in this affliction it would be removed. He may even have surmised that God wished to bring him to the point of humbly asking for

its removal.

St. Paul explains to us that he did request healing – the removal of this grievous affliction or "thorn." He tells us that he did this three times. There is a point in connection with the matter which apparently up to that time he had not discerned clearly, namely, that the healing of his eyes would be so much of ***restitution*** blessing. But St. Paul, like the others of us, had been called of the Lord not to restitution, but to ***sacrifice***; as he himself explained the matter to others, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1.) Knowing that the blessings of God were passing through him to others, he wondered that some might not have been for himself. He had yet to learn that the gifts conferred to him were for the worldly and not for the saints, who had consecrated to sacrifice. He had yet to learn that, if permitted of the Lord to take back his consecration to sacrifice, it would mean his letting go proportionately of the spiritual blessings and favors which God bestows upon us when we sacrifice earthly things.

TWO WAYS OF ASSISTING US

It would not have been right for St. Paul to have been encouraged in a wrong course, in harmony with his prayers for healing. Hence, those prayers were refused. True, the Lord has granted similar requests from many who knew no better than to ask such favors. But with the great Apostle the matter was different. Like his Lord he was an example to the flock and hence it was not appropriate to grant his petition. However, what God did do not only furnished a lesson to St. Paul, but a blessed lesson to us, his brethren, throughout the Gospel Age.

While it was not proper to remove the burden from the Apostle in answer to his prayer; while God saw a special way in which this thorn in the flesh would be specially helpful to him in the development of the holy Spirit, nevertheless his prayer could receive an answer still more effective, still more blessed, in a different way. Instead of removing the difficulty, the Lord promised the more grace, the more strength, the more endurance to meet the difficulty, to overcome it, to compensate for it. This was really much better for St. Paul in every way than if his prayer had been answered. We do not know, neither did he know, how necessary to the preservation of his humility and usefulness in the service was that "thorn in the flesh." We may know assuredly, however, that the giving to him of more grace was the greater blessing; because the grace of the Lord is helpful in all things, in all of life's interests, while the taking away of the thorn would have been merely a relief in the one line. No wonder the Apostle, when he understood the situation, cried out, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." – 2 Cor. 12:9.

There have been blessed lessons for all of the Lord's dear people throughout the Gospel Age in these experiences of St. Paul. We have various thorns in the flesh, various difficulties, various trials; some of them mental; some physical; some well understood by others; others unknown except by ourselves. What a comfort it has been to many to have the Lord's assurance that what trials and difficulties he does not remove from us, he permits for wise and loving purposes. These, he assures us, will all work together for our good. Of these he declares, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Taking this, the Apostle's viewpoint, dear fellow-servants of the cross, let us take all of our experiences in good faith, realizing the truth of these words, that our weaknesses, our imperfections, our frailties, so far from working injury to us, will, under the Lord's supervising care, enable him to supplement the more our willing endeavors with his strength.

Paul leaving the Ephesian brethren

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 20:36-38

"TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES AND THE FLOCK" – R. 4458

ACTS 20:2-38

"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." – Philippians 4:13

WHEN St. Paul fled from Ephesus, after the rioting, he made a tour of the European Churches which he had founded. Passing through Macedonia to the city of Corinth he came by vessel again to Miletus, about fifty miles south of Ephesus. He was accompanied by representatives of several of the churches of Asia Minor. He was en route for Jerusalem, for whose poor at his suggestion collections had been made in the four provinces in which he had been preaching. Seven delegates accompanied him, representatives of the Church at Thessalonica, Berea, Derbe and Ephesus. These visits are supposed to have consumed several months of time, and now, at Miletus, he would have his final opportunity of bidding goodby to the Elders of the Ephesus Church. The vessel on which the party were to go to the Jerusalem port was detained indefinitely at Miletus, so word was sent to the Elders at Ephesus and they came to Miletus.

Our lesson specially calls to our attention the Apostle's address to these Elders. We are not to understand this as a boastful statement, but rather as a plain rehearsal of matters which his hearers would fully concede and of which he boasted nothing. The rehearsal was given, not for his own sake, not as indicating personal vanity and self-praise, but with a view to quickening the recollection of his hearers and making the lesson of the hour more impressive upon them. He reminded them that for the space of three years they had known him intimately, the manner of his life, his devotion to the Lord, to the service of the Truth and to the service of the brethren. He reminded them of his humility of mind; that he had not been with them as a boaster; that his conduct had not been haughty and overbearing; that he had not sought to "lord it" over the Church, but on the contrary, he had endured amongst them many trials and difficulties with the Jews, with "false brethren."

They knew of his work, his endurance and of his holding back nothing from them that would be helpful to them; that he had taught them both publicly and privately as circumstances opened to him opportunities. He had testified both to Jews and to Greeks that there is only the one Gospel of Christ, to be accepted through faith and turning away from sin. By calling attention to these elements of his own character he was laying the foundation for his subsequent exhortation to them that they should copy his zeal, his fidelity. He had been a faithful overseer or bishop, watching over their interests. He had been a faithful pastor, guiding their welfare and seeing to their nourishment in spiritual things. Knowing the truthfulness of these presentations and having the whole situation in mind, they would be the better prepared to receive from such an one his parting exhortation – the great lesson which he had to give them.

"BOUND IN THE SPIRIT"

He informed the brethren that although possessed of his physical liberty he felt a bondage or restraint upon his mind that he could not shake off; that he must go to Jerusalem; that this was the Lord's providence for him; and that at the same time he received assurances from others through the "gifts" that bonds and imprisonment awaited him at Jerusalem. Then he adds these courageous words: "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." The Apostle had become apparently more intimately acquainted with the Ephesus Church than with any of the others. Apparently it was one

of the most flourishing of them all. He had, by the Lord's providence, spent more time with them, and evidently the results procured justified the prolonged stay. Partings between friends are always grievous. And parting with no hope of seeing each other again this side the veil is a doubly severe ordeal.

"PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Incidentally we note the message which the Apostle delivered and which he here particularly emphasizes as the Gospel of Christ – "preaching the Kingdom of God." It is right that we should recognize that this is the same Gospel which we are preaching today, or, if not, that we are not preaching aright. The grace of God was manifested in the gift of his Son, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. The grace of God was further manifested in an outline of how the death of Christ was designed to bring blessings to our race:

(1) By ultimately establishing a Kingdom under the whole heavens for the rule of mankind; for the suppression of sin and death; for the uplifting of those bound by these enemies.

(2) As a precedent to that general blessing to the world, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," the Divine proclamation first calls out the "little flock" to be joint-heirs with their dear Redeemer in that Kingdom. Thank God that these precious truths, respecting the grace of God and the Kingdom of God, so long covered and hidden from our sight by the traditions of the dark ages, are now coming forward, are now being revealed by the enlightenment of our eyes by the Spirit – that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, and that thus we might be assisted in making our calling and our election sure!

No wonder the Apostle could add the forceful words, "I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." What he preached to the Church at Ephesus during his three years' stay amongst them is surely the same message which, by Divine arrangement, has come down to us in his epistles addressed to the various churches. We note that St. Paul's message contained not one word respecting eternal torment, which is no part of the Divine Plan. Surely from these epistles we now assent that St. Paul was very patient in reproving, instructing, encouraging the Lord's dear people. He was much used of the Lord because he had given himself so thoroughly to the Lord.

Herein we note the difference between the operation of the holy Spirit of God and the operation of the unholy spirits, the fallen angels. In both cases the control increases in proportion as the individual relinquishes his own will. Fortunately for humanity we all possess an inherent dread of self-surrender. Had it not been for this natural tendency, this natural self-will, doubtless the whole world today would be obsessed by the evil angels, or, at least, more largely under their control. Even amongst spirit mediums there is generally only a partial yielding of the will and an urging by the spirits toward a full self-surrender. Spirit mediums, however, are freely warned through their journals and books that there is great danger in a complete surrender of the will, lest an evil spirit gain full possession – obsess the medium. Alas! poor mediums! They know not that all of the spirits which communicate through them are evil spirits, demons, fallen angels, who, at times, personate human beings and represent themselves as our dead friends.

Not even husbands and wives dare fully to surrender to each other their wills without danger of injury. Nor should parents seek to coerce their children to a condition of entire will-lessness. To whatever extent they do this they injure the child, detract from its personality and make it a more easy dupe for the fallen angels.

The One, the only One, to whom we dare submit our wills fully, completely, is the Lord. He invites this full submission of the will to him; and we, in his name and as his ambassadors, may freely invite our children, our friends, our neighbors, to this same full submission of their hearts to the Lord. The more fully consecrated the will the greater the submission, the more blessed should be the experience – the greater the usefulness in the Lord's service. This is the substance of St. Paul's exhortation, "Be ye filled with the Spirit," sanctified, set apart wholly unto the Lord. In proportion as this condition of consecration or will submission is attained – in such proportion we may be used of the Lord as his mouthpieces, his instruments, ready for his service, the service of the Truth, the service of the flock. St. Paul was a noble example of such a full self-consecration to the Lord; of such a filling with the Spirit; of such an emptying of self-will; of such a deadness to the world, its will, its plans, its service.

No wonder the Apostle was able to assure the brethren that they might follow him, as he was following Christ. Christ was filled with the Father's Spirit. St. Paul, a loyal follower in his footsteps, had a similar filling experience though of smaller capacity. And all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must similarly be filled with his Spirit, the will of Christ, the will of the Father – and be dead to earthly ambitions. The Apostle's thought in calling the elders was to impress upon them that, like himself, they not only were consecrated to the Lord, but, as teachers in the Church, they had a double responsibility – in respect to themselves and in respect to the Church of which the Lord had made them overseers.

Notice his words, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock in the which the holy Spirit hath made you overseers (bishops) to feed the Church of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own (Son)." – V. 28.

Several points in this are worthy of careful attention. The revised version, quoted above, says, "In the which the holy Spirit hath made you bishops," thus agreeing that the general Scripture statement that the elders of the Church are not ***over*** the Church in the sense of a superior, or "clergy," class, but ***in*** the Church – members of it – overseeing members, assisting members, by appointment of the Lord through the channel of the Church. Note the two points:

(1) They needed to take heed to themselves and to take heed to the flock. Whoever attempts to do shepherding in the Church will need, first of all, to watch himself lest he fall into temptation, for, as the Apostle declares, Those who accept the position of Elders in the Church, pastors, overseers, are exposed to special trials, special difficulties. They need primarily to take heed to themselves, lest, having preached to others, they themselves become castaways.

(2) Those who accept the ministry or service of the Church as Elder-Brothers under the Divine regulation should realize that they have assumed a weighty responsibility respecting which they must "give an account to God." (Rom. 14:12.) This does not mean fault-finding with the brethren. It does not mean merely preaching to them; nor merely visiting the sick and counseling the troubled. It means an oversight, a care of all the interests of the congregation and the individuals of it in their every detail. Those who are over-charged with the cares of this life are not in a condition, in any sense of the word, to accept the responsibilities of this service in the Church of the living God and should not be invited to do so; should not be voted for as Elders. Only those who seek first the interests of the Lord's Kingdom and the righteousness which it represents are in any sense or degree properly suited to such service in the Church. They should consider it a part of their responsibility to notice how the dear brethren and sisters are progressing, especially in their spiritual interests. They should feel it a part of their duty to warn, to encourage, to assist all of these, as opportunity may offer.

It is not the prerogative of all the brethren and sisters in the Church to endeavor to set each other right, unless it be in some ***personal*** matter specially related to themselves; then Matt. 18:15 should be strictly followed. An Elder, however, by his very election, has been asked to take such an oversight of the affairs of the congregation, to give such advice, to give such reproofs, as the nature of the case may seem to demand – in meekness, remembering himself also, lest he should be tempted, if not along the same lines, then possibly along some other line of temptation. He, too, of course, should follow Matt. 18:15.

GRIEVOUS WOLVES AND PERVERSE TALKERS

The Apostle, by way of impressing this duty of oversight upon the elders, reminds them that the Lord purchased this flock with the precious blood of the Lamb of God and that this value in the Lord's sight should be so deeply impressed upon their minds that they would be willing to lay down their lives for the brethren in any service which they could render.

Emphasizing the caution already given, the Apostle prophetically declared that there would be great need of their taking heed to themselves, because ***of their own selves***, of the flock itself, and especially amongst the Elders, men would arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them; desirous of being leaders, they would not hesitate to produce a schism or division in the Church to help along their ambition. The word ***perverse*** (here) in the original signified ***distorted***, ***twisted***. The thought is that those who begin to lose the Spirit of the Lord, begin to lose their clearness of appreciation of the Truth. As personal and selfish ambitions cloud their vision they see the Scriptures more vaguely and feel free to twist or distort them to make them support their ambitious sentiments. How true the Apostle's words; how great a danger there is along these lines, especially to the Elders, the overseers of the flock! Evidently selfish ambition is one of the greatest of foes with which they must contend. Nor do these ambitions suddenly germinate, bloom and bear fruit; the process is a gradual one and hence the more dangerous, the more deceptive, the less likely to have our notice. How important then that all of the Lord's flock, and especially the elders, take heed to themselves and scrutinize their conduct, and, above all, the motives lying behind their deeds! Let us remember that absolute purity of the will is essential. Every admixture of selfishness, however little, is a poisonous virus which, if unchecked, would lead to the Second Death. "Take heed to yourselves," is the admonition, for, the Apostle goes on to say, that of their own selves should men arise telling truths in a distorted fashion, for the purpose of drawing away disciples after them; for the purpose of being leaders in the flock; for the purpose of having praise and honor of men. Ah, how dear the price – the loss of Divine favor and of eternal life!

"Grievous wolves" are ferocious wolves. For a time they may deceive the sheep by an outward manner and outward profession, covering their wolfish nature. They and the outward conduct by which they deceive are Scripturally designated, "Wolves in sheep's clothing." The Shepherd certainly knows their character before it becomes manifest to the sheep; but the docile, innocent sheep are deceived until these wolves begin biting and devouring and scattering the flock. The howls of anger, malice, hatred, envy and strife are noted in the Scriptures as "works of the flesh and of the devil" – not works of righteousness and peace and love, the Spirit of the Lord. The wolf does injury with his mouth and so do these – slandering, backbiting and doing every evil work.

St. Paul warned the Elders of the Ephesus Ecclesia what to expect, and his words are true. Hymenaeus and Alexander, Phygellus and Hermogenes, and Philetus are mentioned by name. (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17.) The same principles are still at work. The same

warning still needs to be heeded. Indeed, the Scriptures in general imply that the severest experiences along these same lines are due to come upon the Church in "the evil day" with which this Gospel dispensation will close.

"NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS"

"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Here are two points set before us; first, the duty of the Elders of the Church to watch against these evils so graphically portrayed; to watch for the interests of the flock as against the wolves; to watch to give the wolves as little opportunity as possible to tear the flock and backbite them, and to warn the sheep lest any of them, becoming inoculated with the rabies of the wolves, should display signs of hydrophobia and begin backbiting one another, with the usual symptoms of hydrophobia – with an apparent thirst for water (Truth) yet a refusal to drink it.

Second, the elders are to watch also against those sure to arise "of your own selves." Proper watching will begin with our own hearts, saying, Lord, is it I? And proper watching will in time discern such characters as Hymenaeus and Philetus and, following the Apostle's example, will expose them – not from any feeling of bitterness towards them, but in the interests of and for the protection of the flock. St. Paul reminds the brethren that such was his own course – one of great watchfulness, interest, care, over them and over all the Churches of Asia Minor. The expression, "Night and day with tears," shows us clearly that the great Apostle felt properly the weight of responsibility resting upon him as a servant of God and an ambassador of the King of kings and an over-shepherd and overseer of the Lord's flock – as a "minister of the New Covenant," delegated by the Great Head to assist in calling out those who will be the members of his Body, for their instruction and building up in the "most holy faith," that eventually they might all come to the full measure of the stature of manhood in the Body of Christ, as the great Mediator, Prophet, Priest and King of the world.

DIVINE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

The exhortation closed thus, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The Apostle's thought seems to have been that his words, his earnest exhortation, might not only awaken them, but have them to inquire as to what defences could be depended upon for the crisis thus pointed out. He draws attention to the fact that God, the great Center of all our blessings, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, is on our part, is on the part of all those who are seeking to cooperate with his arrangements. By way of further explanation he mentions the Scriptures, the Word of God's grace, the Gospel message. He tells them that they, and we also, may be assured that the Word of God is able to build us up, to give us the necessary development of character, of heart and head, and to give us ultimately a share in the great inheritance which God has in reservation for all those who are sanctified by this message.

Let us lay this well to heart: neglect of God's Word of grace, neglect of his promises means a deficiency of strength to bear the trial which is our portion. It means also the opening of the door for Satan to put light for darkness and darkness for light for our confusion. It means that those who will not give strict heed in following might be unable to distinguish between the bleating of the sheep and "the midnight howl" of the wolf; might be unable to distinguish between those who are holding fast and blowing on the trumpets of the Lord's Word and those who are seeking to cause divisions amongst the sheep and speaking perverse things – misrepresenting facts, that they might divide the flock and draw some after themselves.

Let us make no mistake. It is a question of

inheritance or ***no inheritance***, amongst them which are sanctified. He who is faithful in that which is least, acknowledges the Lord and his provisions in connection with all of his blessings, temporal and spiritual, will be prepared to look forward with continued zeal and will receive the Shepherd's care accordingly. On the other hand, those who do not appreciate the "meat in due season" and the special provisions of this Harvest time – these will not be prepared; these will quite likely be deceived by those who endeavor to deceive them and draw them aside to themselves.

AS AN EXAMPLE TO THE FLOCK

St. Paul had already pointed out that the lesson of the law was that the ox that threshed the corn should be allowed to have a share of it for his nourishment; and that similarly those who minister to the Church in spiritual things legally, justly, should have a share in the temporal blessings of those whom they serve. He had also pointed out that if he had served the Church spiritual things of immeasurably more value to them than earthly things, it would be a small thing indeed for the Church to minister to his temporal needs. But, while noting these as points of equity, which should be observed by the Church, he did not require these things of them. It would be to their advantage to see these matters in their proper light and to act accordingly. But if they did not see their privileges in serving him and other ministers of the Truth in temporal matters, he perceived that this offered him a still larger opportunity for self-sacrifice, self-denial in the service of the Truth. Their neglect he did not resent, saying, You have refused me temporal necessities, I will refuse you spiritual comforts. On the contrary, his reasoning was this: These dear sheep need the spiritual blessings and I am so glad that I am privileged by the Lord to be his servant in dispensing them. The more it may cost me in the way of self-sacrifice, self-denial, the more it will evidence to the Lord my love for him, for his Truth, for his flock, and the more I will have of the Great Shepherd's favor, because I will be more like the great Redeemer, who bought the sheep by the sacrifice of himself.

On these lines the Apostle proceeds to call attention to his course – not boastingly, but for their advantage, that they might be the better able to discern what would be the proper character of an under-shepherd of the Lord. He says, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel." He was not serving them for the accumulation of wealth, nor to secure the comforts of the present life. He coveted their hearts. He coveted the pleasure of bringing them into relationship with the great Head of the Church as members of his Body. He appreciated his privileges as a minister of the New Covenant along these lines – preparing the members of the Body of Christ, the Mediator, and helping them to make their calling and election sure to the glorious things promised in the Word.

He continues, "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." Apparently some of those who were of St. Paul's company had no trade or could find no profitable employment, while the Apostle's trade of sail-making, tent-making, was apparently a lucrative one, furnishing employment in the various seacoast cities visited. Apparently the others were largely dependent upon this leader for things temporal, as well as things spiritual. He had never complained. He did not now complain. He merely drew their attention to the proper course which he believed he had followed, which he believed was pleasing in the sight of the Lord. He commended to them a similar spirit of love for the Lord and love for the flock and love for the Truth – to the self-sacrificing degree. Thus they might be faithful stewards of God's mercy, faithful overseers of his flock. His own form of stating the message is summed up thus, "I have showed you an example, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

JOURNEYING TOWARD JERUSALEM – R. 5935

ACTS 20:16-27

"I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace." – Acts 20:32

WHEN St. Paul fled from Ephesus, after the rioting, he made a tour of the European Churches which he had founded. Passing through Macedonia to the city of Corinth, he came by vessel again to Miletus, about fifty miles south of Ephesus. He was accompanied by representatives of several of the Churches of Greece and Asia Minor, and was en route for Jerusalem, for whose poor he had suggested that collections be made in the four provinces where he had been preaching. The vessel on which the party were to go to the Jerusalem port was detained indefinitely at Miletus. Word was then sent to the Elders at Ephesus, and they came to Miletus.

Today's Study calls attention especially to the Apostle's address to these Elders. We are not to think of it as a boastful statement, but rather as a plain rehearsal of matters which his hearers would fully concede and of which he boasted nothing. It was given, not for his own sake, not as indicating personal vanity and self-praise, but with a view to quickening the memory of his hearers and making the lesson of the hour the more impressive upon them. He reminded them that for the space of three years they had known him intimately – his manner of life, his devotion to the Lord, to the service of the Truth and of the brethren. He also reminded them of his humility of mind – that his conduct had not been haughty and overbearing, that he had not sought to lord it over the Church, but that on the contrary he had endured amongst them many trials and difficulties with the Jews, with "false brethren."

The Elders knew of his work, of his endurance and of his holding nothing back from them that would be helpful to them; they knew that he had taught them publicly and privately, as circumstances had opened to him opportunities of service. He had testified to both Jews and Greeks that there is only the one Gospel of Christ, to be accepted through faith and turning away from sin. By calling attention to these elements of his own character, he was laying the foundation for his subsequent exhortation to them that they should copy his zeal, his fidelity. He had been a faithful overseer, or bishop, watching over their interests. He had been a faithful pastor, guiding their welfare and seeing to their nourishment in spiritual things. Knowing the truthfulness of his presentations and having the whole situation in mind, they would be the better prepared to hear from him his parting exhortation – the great lesson which he had to give them.

St. Paul informed the Elders that although possessed of his physical liberty he felt a mental restraint which he could not shake off; that he must go to Jerusalem; that this was the Lord's providence for him; and that he had received assurances from others through the "gifts of the Spirit" that bonds and imprisonment awaited him at Jerusalem. Then he added these encouraging words: "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom, shall see my face no more."

The Apostle had become more intimately acquainted with the Ephesian Church, apparently, than with any of the others. By the Lord's providence he had spent more time with them; and apparently the results procured had justified his prolonged stay. Partings between friends are always grievous; and parting with no hope of seeing each other again on this side the veil is a doubly severe ordeal.

"PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Incidentally we note the Message which the Apostle delivered, and which he here particularly emphasizes as the Gospel of Christ – "preaching the Kingdom of God." It is right that we should recognize that this is the same Gospel which we are preaching today. If otherwise, then we are not preaching aright. The grace of God was manifested in the gift of His Son, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. The grace of God was further manifested in an outline of the manner in which the death of Christ was designed to bring blessings to our race:

(1) By ultimately establishing a Kingdom under the whole heavens for the rule of mankind, for the suppression of Sin and Death, for the uplifting of those who have been bound by these enemies.

(2) As a precedent to that general blessing to the world, for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven," the Divine proclamation first calls out a Little Flock to be joint-heirs with their dear Redeemer in that Kingdom.

Thank God that these precious truths respecting the grace of God and the Kingdom of God, so long covered and hidden from our sight by the traditions of the Dark Ages, are now being revealed to our eyes of understanding by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, in order that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, and that thus we might be assisted in making our calling and election sure!

No wonder the Apostle could add the forceful words, "I testify unto you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." What he preached to the Church at Ephesus during his sojourn of nearly three years amongst them is surely the same Message which, by Divine arrangement, has come down to us in his Epistles addressed to the various Churches. We note that St. Paul's Message contained not even one word respecting eternal torment, which is no part of the Divine Plan. Surely from these Epistles we now perceive that St. Paul was very patient in reproving, instructing and encouraging the Lord's dear people! He was much used of the Lord because he had given himself so thoroughly to the Lord.

RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ELDERS

The Apostle's thought in calling the Elders was to impress upon them the fact that, like himself, not only were they consecrated to the Lord, but, as teachers in the Church, they had a double responsibility – in respect to themselves and in respect to the Church of which the Lord had made them overseers. Notice his words, "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers [Greek, ***episcopos*** – bishops], to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with blood of His own [Son]." – **Verse 28**.

(1) They needed to take heed to both themselves and the flock. Whoever attempts to do shepherding in the Church will need, first of all, to watch lest he fall into temptation; for, as the Apostle declares, those who accept the position of Elders in the Church – pastors, overseers – are exposed to especial trials, especial difficulties. They need primarily to take heed to themselves lest, having preached to others, they themselves become castaways.

(2) "Those who accept the ministry, or service, of the Church as Elder Brothers under the Divine regulation should realize that they have assumed a weighty responsibility, respecting which they must give an account to God." This does not mean fault-finding with the brethren. It does not mean merely preaching to them, nor merely visiting the sick and counseling the troubled. It means a spiritual oversight, a care of all the interests of both the congregation and the individuals composing it. Those who

are overcharged with the cares of this life are not in a condition, in any sense of the word, to accept the responsibilities of this service in the Church of the living God. Only those who seek first the interests of the Lord's Kingdom and the righteousness which it inculcates are in any sense or degree properly suited to such service in the Church.

Several points in **Verse 28** are worthy of careful attention. The Revised Version, quoted above, says, "In the which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops," thus agreeing with the general Scriptural statement that the Elders of the Church are NOT OVER THE CHURCH in the sense of being a superior class, or "clergy" class, but are IN THE CHURCH – members of it – overseeing members, assisting members, by the appointment of the Lord through the channel of the Church. They should consider it a part of their responsibility to notice how the other members are progressing, especially in their spiritual interests. They should feel it a part of their duty to warn, to encourage, to assist all of the other members, as opportunity may offer.

ESPECIAL DANGERS AMONGST ELDERS

It is not the prerogative of all the brethren and sisters in the Church to endeavor to set each other right, unless it be in some personal matter especially related to themselves. In such cases the advice given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 should be strictly followed. An Elder, however, by his very election to his office, has been asked to take such oversight of the affairs of the congregation, to give such advice, to administer such reproofs, as the nature of the case may demand – in meekness, remembering himself also, lest he should be tempted, if not along the same lines, then possibly along some other line of temptation. He, too, of course, should practice Matthew 18:15-17. – Galatians 6:1.

By way of impressing this duty of oversight upon the Elders, St. Paul reminded them that the Lord had purchased this Flock with the precious blood of the Lamb of God, and that this value in the Lord's sight should be so deeply impressed upon their minds that they would be willing to lay down their lives for the brethren in any service which they could render.

Emphasizing the caution already given, the Apostle prophetically declared that there would be great need of their taking heed to themselves, because of their own selves, of the Flock itself, and especially amongst the Elders, men would arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Desirous of being leaders, they would not hesitate to produce a schism, or division, in the Church, in order to help along their ambition. The word rendered perverse in **Verse 30** signifies, in the original, distorted, twisted. The thought is that those who begin to lose the Spirit of the Lord begin also to lose their clear appreciation of the Truth. As personal and selfish ambitions cloud their vision, they see the Scriptures more and more vaguely, and feel free to distort these so as to support their own ambitious sentiments.

How true are the Apostle's words! How great a danger there is along these lines, especially to the Elders, the overseers of the Flock! Evidently selfish ambition is one of the greatest of foes with which they must contend. Nor do these ambitions suddenly germinate, bloom and bear fruit. The process is a gradual one, and hence the more dangerous, the more deceptive, the less likely to have our notice. How important, then, it is that all of the Lord's Flock, and especially the Elders, take heed to themselves and scrutinize their conduct, and particularly the motives lying behind their deeds! Let us remember that absolute purity of the will is essential. Every admixture of selfishness, however little, is a poisonous virus which, if unchecked, would lead to the Second Death.

"Grievous wolves" are ferocious wolves. For a time they may deceive the sheep by an outward manner and an outward profession,

covering their wolfish nature. They and the outward conduct by which they deceive the Flock are Scripturally designated, "Wolves in sheep's clothing." (Matthew 7:15, 16.) The Shepherd knows their character long before it becomes manifest to the sheep. But the docile, innocent sheep are deceived until these wolves begin to bite, to devour and to scatter the Flock. The howls of anger, malice, hatred, envy and strife are noted in the Scriptures as "works of the flesh and of the Devil" – not works of righteousness, peace and love, the Spirit of the Lord. The wolf does injury with his mouth; and so do these "grievous wolves" – slandering, back-biting and doing every evil work. The Apostle warned the Elders of Ephesus what to expect, and his words were true. The same principles are still at work. The same warning still needs to be heeded. Indeed, the Scriptures imply that the severest experiences along these lines would come upon the Church in "the evil day" with which the Gospel Age would close, the time in which we now are living.

"DAY AND NIGHT WITH TEARS"

In **Verse 31** the Apostle sets two points before us. First, the Elders are to watch against these evils so graphically portrayed. They are to watch for the interests of the Flock as against the wolves. They are to watch to give the wolves as little opportunity as possible to tear the Flock and to backbite them. They are to warn the sheep lest any of them, becoming inoculated with the rabies of the wolves, should display signs of hydrophobia and begin to backbite one another, with the usual symptoms of hydrophobia – with an apparent thirst for water, symbol of Truth, yet refusing to drink it – turning against it.

Second, the Elders are to watch also against those sure to arise "of your own selves." Proper watching begins with our own hearts, saying, "Lord, is it I?" And proper watching will in time discern such characters and expose them – not from any bitterness towards them, but for the protection of the Flock. – 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17.

St. Paul reminded the brethren that such had been his own course – one of great watchfulness, interest, care, over them and over all the Churches of Asia Minor. The expression, "Night and day with tears," shows us clearly that he felt properly the weight of responsibility resting upon him as a servant of God, an ambassador of the King of kings, an over-shepherd, an overseer, of the Lord's Flock, a "minister of the New Covenant," delegated by the great Head of the Church to assist in calling out and preparing those who will be members of the glorified Body of Christ, to reign with Him a thousand years.

DIVINE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

In the closing words of his exhortation the Apostle's thought seems to be that he desired his words, his earnest address, might not only awaken the Elders to a keen sense of their responsibilities, but might lead them to inquire as to what defenses could be depended upon for the crisis thus pointed out. He draws attention to the fact that God, the great Center of all our blessings, from whom comes every good and every perfect gift, is on our part, is on the part of all who are seeking to cooperate with His arrangements.

By way of further explanation he mentions the Scriptures, the Word of God's grace, the Gospel Message. He tells them, and us also, that the Word of God is able to build us up, to give us the necessary development of character and to give us ultimately a share in the great inheritance which God has in reservation for all those who are sanctified by this Message. Let us lay this well to heart. Neglect of God's Word, neglect of His promises, means a deficiency of strength to bear the trial which is our portion. It means also the opening of the door for Satan to put darkness for light and light for darkness, to our confusion. Let us make no mistake. It is a question of inheritance or no inheritance, amongst them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Verses 33 and 34 are a noble testimony. The Apostle had used his trade as a tent-maker not only for his own support, but for the financial assistance of those associated with him in the Gospel work. Praise God for so noble an example of devotion! Although the Apostle did not, could not, endure as much as did our Redeemer, nevertheless the illustration of a full devotion which his life affords does us all great good; for we remember that he had like passions with ourselves, as he himself declared. He was imperfect, and was obliged to keep his body under – in subjection to his new mind, the will of God in Christ. – 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

In **Verse 35** he reveals the secret of his success as a servant of the Lord. He constantly remembered and put into practice the Master's words. The art of GIVING HIMSELF is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life. He first gives his will to the Lord, then his time, his energy, his talents, to the Lord's service and for the Lord's people. He has pleasure in the giving and a blessing, whether others know it or not. By and by his time will come for receiving his full reward. To such the Lord will give eternal life, eternal glory and association with Himself in His Kingdom.

PAUL'S HEART REVEALED – R. 2220

ACTS 20:22-35

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." – Acts 20:35

PERHAPS no other words give us a clearer insight into the heart of the Apostle Paul than his address to the elders of the Church at Ephesus. They show us what were the moving impulses of his active life. He sought not for ease or fame or worldly pleasure. He was thoroughly imbued with his Master's holy spirit which delighted in honoring God and doing good to all, regardless of earthly reward, persecutions, insults, slander and misrepresentations.

In our lesson for August 29th we saw how the Apostle "endured a great fight of affliction" at Ephesus, just as he was about to start for Macedonia. It is supposed that he spent about ten months in Macedonia and Greece, visiting the Churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth, besides extending his labors into other cities further north, not previously reached, but where some interest had been awakened by others. Having gone the rounds, he was now on his way to Jerusalem with the collections of the Churches of Macedonia and Corinth. His time was limited, if he would reach Jerusalem in season for the Passover, and hence instead of going overland and visiting the Churches of Asia-Minor, he continued his course by sea and sent word from Miletus, the seaport, to Ephesus, inviting the Elders of the Church there to] come to him: and this lesson is Luke's report of his discourse to them.

God made known to the Apostle the fact that something extraordinary was to befall him at Jerusalem, as a consequence of which he would never again have the privilege of meeting these dear brethren in the flesh. This made the present meeting with the elders or representatives of the Church a specially impressive one, and at the end of his talk his auditors were in tears.

Wishing to stimulate these dear brethren who, inasmuch as they were chosen as elders or special servants of the Church, may be regarded as amongst the most earnest and zealous of the Lord's people in Ephesus, the

Apostle very briefly refreshes their minds on a subject already well known to them; – his own methods and course as a minister of Christ. He would impart to them some of his own spirit of consecration – the Master's spirit – that they might be the more faithful as servants of the Lord and of his people. He reminds them, but not boastfully, of his own humility of mind in serving the Church; how he kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but on the contrary sought to impart to all the same knowledge of the divine character and plan which he himself enjoyed, and how he had not affected a superior wisdom that made peculiar statements without submitting the proofs. The inference is left for his hearers that they would thenceforth have an increased responsibility and should seek to follow the same heaven directed course.

While telling them that his trials were not over, but that evidently worse things awaited him, he courageously declares, "But none of these things move me, neither do I count my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy and [fulfill] the ministry that I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel by the grace of God."

After calling their attention to his own faithfulness in keeping back nothing that would be profitable, and thus making sure that he was free from responsibility in respect to any that might fall away, he exhorts his hearers to take heed, to be careful **(1)** of themselves: that they might make their own calling and election sure; that they might so walk in the footsteps of the Master that they would be acceptable to him. And **(2)** they should remember that, having accepted special appointment as ministers, they had an added responsibility on behalf of the Lord's flock. Oh, that all the servants of the Lord's cause might take this exhortation to heart, and feel the responsibility that rests upon all who minister in holy things. (And this will apply in a still wider sense, for every brother and every sister is to some extent his brother's and sister's keeper, and is commissioned to help in watching over the Lord's flock.) The Apostle points out that their commission is not merely that of the Church which selected them to be its servants in holy things, but that they became representatives of the holy spirit, and are therefore not to think lightly of the responsibility which they have accepted. The whole Church of the consecrated are begotten of the spirit, and hence their conscientious action in selecting their Elders, according to divine direction, is to be considered the work and selection of the holy spirit.

The object of the appointment of these elders, as the Apostle points out, was to ***feed*** the Church of Christ; to bring to the attention of the flock the green pastures and still waters of divine truth. They are not commissioned to pen them up in human sects and thus hinder the sheep from pasturing upon the Lord's provision. Neither are they to consider the sheep as so much mutton whereoff they may feed themselves, and from whom they may shear the golden fleece for their own benefit: they are to remember that the Church is not theirs, but God's, which he purchased with the precious blood. They are therefore to conduct themselves as servants or ministers of the Lord's flock, and not as its lords and masters.

Speaking prophetically, the Apostle declares his knowledge of the fact that greedy wolves would get in amongst the flock, and full of selfishness would be reckless of the interests of the sheep, and careful only of their own interests. These are some of the "wolves" which deceptively present themselves "in sheep's clothing," for otherwise the sheep would be on guard against them. And still worse than this the Apostle prophesies, – there would arise amongst themselves certain "heady" ones who, desirous of name and fame, would preach errors in order to "draw away disciples after them." Alas, how true this prophecy has proved, applicable not only to the Church at Ephesus but to the Church all the way down, from then until now! How few like the Apostle seem willing to preach not themselves, but Christ, and not human philosophies (their

own or those of other men) but the cross of Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God to every one that believeth. And the Apostle points out that he had been guarding them and the whole Church along these lines for three years.

These, he says, will speak ***perverse things***; – that is, they will distort the truth, to make it harmonize with some theory which they have accepted and which they wish to impress upon others, thereby exalting themselves as the discoverers of new light. No less than five of these false teachers who arose in the Church of Ephesus, some before and some after, are mentioned in the Apostle's epistles to Timothy, – Hymeneus, Alexander, Phygellus, Hermogenes and Philetus. – 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17.

Under the circumstances, realizing the trials that were coming upon them, and that he would be unable to share these with them, what commendation would the Apostle give to these representatives of the Church? He gave them grand advice in these words, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Ah yes, there can be no better recommendation to any than this – to keep close to the divine Word, and to take heed lest they twist or wrest the Scriptures, and thus blind themselves and make ready for the Adversary to lead them further into darkness. The Apostle thus points out to them that they are not yet ready for the heavenly inheritance; that they must first be built up in sanctification; and that the spirit of the Lord's Word permeating them will more and more produce this sanctification of heart and life.

What a noble testimony by the grace of God Paul was enabled to give: "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel." He not only had used his trade as a tent-maker for his own support, but also to help financially those who were associated with him in the gospel work. Praise God for so noble an example of devotion! For altho the Apostle could not and did not endure more, nor as much, as his Redeemer, and is not to be considered as a superior example, nevertheless the illustration of a full devotion which his life affords does us great good; for we remember that our Lord was perfect, – holy, harmless, separate from sinners; but the Apostle declares that he had "like passions" with ourselves; – he was imperfect, and obliged to keep his "body under," in subjection to his new mind, the will of God in Christ.

And now we come to the grandest expression of the whole discourse: "I have showed you [illustrated to you, in] all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Would that these words might be deeply graven upon all our memories. The world's rule, the general disposition of the fallen nature, is to give adherence or support to the strong, and expect weaker ones to rally around and support or uphold us. This is self-pleasing – the way of the fallen nature: but the method of the "new creatures" is to be the reverse of this – they are to be on the lookout for the welfare, interests and comforts of others, especially in their own families; and applying the Apostle's words to the Church they inculcate carefulness for the weaker members of the "household of faith." Each of the stronger should take pleasure in helping the weaker and the less learned, and so far as possible in bringing all up to the stature of manhood in Christ.

And the Apostle here shows that the secret of his success as a servant of the Lord, and the reason why his life could be pointed to as a pattern, was that he was remembering and putting into practice the words of the Great Teacher. The art of ***giving himself*** is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life. He first gives his will to the Lord, then his time, his energy, his talents, to the service of the Lord and for the Lord's people. He has pleasure in the giving and a blessing, whether others

know and appreciate it or not; and by and by his time for receiving will come, – the Lord's time for giving. The Lord will give unto such eternal life, eternal glory and association with himself in his Kingdom.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERSHIP – R. 3171

ACTS 20:28-38

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

THE Apostle Paul, on leaving Ephesus after the rioting there, determined to visit Jerusalem again, but first would visit the European churches – of Macedonia and Greece. It was while in Macedonia that he is supposed to have written his second letter to the Corinthians; and, on this tour, while in Corinth for about three months, he is supposed to have written his epistle to the Romans. At this time Nero, aged 21, was Emperor of Rome, and the Apostle Paul was about 56 years of age – in the full prime of his Christian life and experience.

Our lesson finds the Apostle en route to Jerusalem, on a trading vessel which was detained at the port of Miletus, about thirty miles distant from Ephesus. The number of days the vessel would be detained, changing cargo, etc., was uncertain; hence, the Apostle, instead of going to Ephesus, sent word to the elders of the Church there that they might come to him at Miletus – that thus he might have as long as possible with them, without missing his vessel when it would be ready to start. The elders came, and our lesson records the Apostle's address to them. They may have stayed several days in his company, and probably he said much more, but the final words evidently, in the mind of Luke, who chronicled them, were an epitome of the entire address, which is generally esteemed as both eloquent and touching. It is an address from a general overseer to local overseers, and to be appreciated must be viewed from this standpoint.

Take heed unto yourselves": well did the Apostle realize that those who do not keep guard over their own hearts can not faithfully serve the interests of the Church in general. Piety, as well as charity, should begin at home. Along this line John Calvin said, "No one can successfully care for the salvation of others who neglects his own, since he himself is a part of the flock." This thought is brought out by the Apostle, also, saying, "And [take heed] to all the flock, over the which the holy spirit hath made you overseers" – more properly, "in the which," as in the Revised Version; for the overseers are not to be considered lords ***over*** the flock, but members in it who have a responsibility respecting fellow-members. The care of the overseer should not be confined to the well-favored members of the flock, financially, socially, educationally or otherwise; but as the Apostle declares, should be general "to ***all*** the flock" – including the poorest as well as the most uncouth naturally.

The elders were not necessarily aged men, according to the flesh; for in the Church of Christ the flesh is reckoned as dead; – their age, their maturity, their eldership, is as New Creatures. Although the chosen representatives of the Church, they were to esteem their responsibility as coming from on high; – however earthly influences had been associated with their appointment, their obligation was really as representatives of the Lord, through his holy spirit. The word "Elders" here is the same as Presbytery in

1 Tim. 4:14; and the word "overseers" is the same elsewhere in the Scriptures rendered "bishop," signifying one charged with a duty respecting others. We thus see that this word bishop, or overseer, has in modern times been divested of its original simplicity. The elders of the Church of Christ are its overseers, and should realize the responsibility of the position they have accepted. The Apostle Paul was an overseer in a general sense; as he himself expresses it, he had "the care of all the churches" – particularly of all those which, in the Lord's providence, he had been the means of establishing in the truth, or who accepted his ministry, either in person or by letter. While the holy spirit has the supervision of such matters, it, nevertheless, remains for the congregation of the Lord's people to note the leadings of the spirit in the appointment of overseers, and to accept such, and only such, and so much overseeing and supervision as they believe to be of the Lord's providence.

Mr. Thompson-Seton, the renowned student of wild animals, relates in his work, "***Lives of the Hunted***," that "the leaders of the flock gain and hold their position as leaders, not from any authority over the flock, but from the fact that they have shown themselves wisest in finding the best pastures and the most successful in guarding against enemies, – the flock having learned to trust them." This furnishes a good illustration of what the attitude of the Lord's people should be toward those whom they accept as superintendents, overseers, elders, – according to the Scriptures. But alas! we find in the church nominal many leaders who seem to be nearly devoid of the proper qualities of leadership here referred to by the Apostle: **(1)** to oversee, or look out for, the interests of the flock in general; and **(2)** to feed them. It should be observed that the position of a bishop gives no ***authority*** over the Church, except that which properly comes from great piety, wisdom and experience. The flock is to be guarded against errors of doctrine, and from false teachers, and to be guided into the richest pastures of the Word of God, and into the brightest Christian experiences, and into the fields of greatest usefulness.

A prominent writer on this subject says: –

"Mr. Ruskin, in his ***Sesame and Lilies***, commenting on the strange phrase, 'blind mouths,' in Milton's ***Lycidas***, says: 'Those two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of right character in the two great offices of the Church – those of bishop and pastor. A bishop means a person who sees; a pastor means one who feeds; the most unbishoply character a man can have is, therefore, to be blind; the most unpastoral is, instead of feeding, to want to be fed. Nearly all the evils of the Church have arisen from bishops desiring ***power*** more than ***light***. They want authority, not outlooking. It is the king's (Christ is our King) office to rule: the bishop's office is to ***oversee*** the flock, to number it sheep by sheep; to be ready always to give full account of it.'"

The Apostle states the grounds for so earnest an exhortation: **(1)** The Church which they were overseeing and feeding was to be recognized as God's Church, "purchased with the blood of his own [Son]."* That which God so highly valued, and purchased at so great a price, is to be esteemed very precious by all who would be his servants and its servants. **(2)** Because dangers and foes would arise; and while these could not come without divine permission, it is a part of the divine will that they shall serve as tests of faith and loyalty of the entire flock, including the elders, overseers, pastors. The energy necessary to such resistance of evil would tend to develop character which God desires each member of his flock to have. God would not suffer them to be tempted above that they were able, but would with every temptation, or trial, provide a way of escape; but he would have them learn to trust him, to exercise faith and obedience and vigilance and resistance of evil.

* This is not be understood as conflicting with other Scriptural statements to the effect that our Lord Jesus "bought us with his own precious

blood." Both thoughts are correct: though they view the subject from two different standpoints. From the larger standpoint, God is the originator of the entire plan of salvation – from start to finish he is thus the Savior. But he accomplishes the salvation through the Son: he laid help [for us] upon one who was mighty to save – fully qualified. (Isa. 43:11; 1 Tim. 2:5; 4:10; Psa. 89:19.) Thus every feature of our salvation is *of* the Father, though *by* the Son, as the Apostle clearly points out. – 1 Cor. 8:6.

The Apostle evidently knew by inspiration of some kind that he would never see these dear brethren again – that his mission in this field was at a close, and as a true under-shepherd he was looking out for the interests of the flock. He knew, probably from the prophecy of Daniel, that a great falling away was to come; – that the Adversary was to be permitted to develop a great antichrist system, – as he subsequently wrote to the Church at Thessalonica; and he wished the local overseers to realize the responsibility of their position, and to be vigilant. "Grievous wolves shall enter in amongst you, not sparing the flock;" – ambitious for power, influence, etc., they would not hesitate to barter the interests of the flock for their own advancement. Another source of danger would be from within – "of your own selves" some would rise up – be puffed up with ambition, to have followers, adherents, and would lead them into false doctrines, to the injury of themselves and those misled by them.

The knowledge of these things was to keep them on guard continually, not only as against wolves from without, but against the rising of ambitious ones amongst their own number – not necessarily watching each other merely, but rather each specially watching and guarding his own heart against the insidious attacks of the Adversary along the lines indicated, – too great self-esteem or desire to be great. The Apostle, we may be sure, was glad to be able to point to his own course in their midst, as an example of proper humility of spirit, and of zeal for the interests of the flock. "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn [admonish] everyone day and night with tears." The secret of the Apostle's zeal lay, evidently, in his appreciation of the fact that he was God's ambassador, and that the work of the Lord in which he was privileged to be a coworker, is a most important one – relating first to the salvation and perfecting of the saints, the elect, and ultimately through them to the blessing of all the families of the earth. Had the Apostle, during those three years, been neglecting the spiritual interests of the flock, he could not have made such an address as this to the elders. It would not have done to have said: Ye remember how many entertainments of a frivolous character I attended with you and helped to arrange; the oyster suppers and peach-and-cream festivals; the private theatricals, charades and tableaux, and general fun- and money-making schemes which we entered into. The Apostle's appreciation of the fact that he was an ambassador for the King of kings, was ever present with him and lent a force and earnestness to his entreaties on behalf of righteousness and spirituality, which, with his tears, were much better backing than frivolities of any kind.

Turning from the darker picture of coming trials and difficulties, the Apostle commended the brethren to the Lord, who loved his Church so as to purchase it, who watches over its interests, so that the Adversary cannot harm those who faithfully follow the Captain of their salvation, – assuring them that this grace of God might be expected to come to them through his Word. The Apostle had nothing to say against colleges and seminaries and worldly sciences of themselves; but when he would mention the power that is to keep the Lord's people against the wiles of the Adversary it was not to these that he pointed his colaborers, but to the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. We of the present time may well lay this testimony to heart; for today we see foes assaulting the Lord's flock on every hand; wolves who, in the name of science, would not spare the flock, but dash to pieces the faith, the hope, the trust, of the

Lord's people, giving them nothing substantial in return; "higher critics" vaunting themselves upon their superior learning and their ability to distinguish between inspiration and non-inspiration, and who offer to select for the sheep an occasional blade of grass from the Word of God, which, however, they assure the sheep, requires much scholastic learning to make nutritive.

Today, also, we see in every direction this same tendency on the part of some amongst ourselves to arise and to seek to draw away disciples after them; and we need to remember that the defense of the sheep is not to be found in worldly wisdom, but in the power of God, as represented in the Word and plan of God. As the Apostle said to these elders of Ephesus, so we may hear him say to us, that the Word of God is able to build us up substantially, to make us "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," and to give us eventually "an inheritance amongst all them which are sanctified."

It is worthy of note here that all the inheritances and eternal rewards held before the Lord's people in the Scriptures are to the "***sanctified***" – none of them are promised to any other class. One of the Society's colporteurs recently wrote us that when about to deliver a volume of the DAWN series to a person who had subscribed, the lady made objection, and declined to take the book, saying that she understood it denied that the Scriptures taught a hell of eternal torture; and that she was sure to the contrary, and that if there is no such place there ought to be. The colporteur replied by inquiring who she believed would be saved, and she answered, "The holy, the sanctified," the ones mentioned by the Apostle in this lesson. The colporteur asked the lady if she claimed to be one of the consecrated saints of God. She answered, "No." He then replied, "You are expecting, then, to spend eternity in torment?"

The lady saw at once the force of the erroneous argument, and said she would take the book, concluding that if all were to go to eternal torment who were not of the ***sanctified*** class the outlook for the future would be horrible, for almost the entire race. What a relief we find in the clearer knowledge of the divine plan, which shows us that the inheritance of the sanctified is to be the Kingdom, at the second advent of our Lord; and that the Kingdom then to be established is to be the divine agency for blessing the world of mankind with a clear knowledge of God, and a full opportunity to accept his grace and mercy and blessing unto ***sanctification*** and everlasting life through our Lord Jesus.

Having commended them to the Word of God, the Apostle draws attention to his own mode of life, while with them, as a proper illustration of the effect of the Gospel in a sanctified heart – as a ***proper example of an overseer and elder*** in the Church, which they should seek to copy. He could speak of these things now, to these fellow-elders, in a manner that he probably would have hesitated to speak of them to the Church at Ephesus while still ministering to them, as, by some, it might have been considered boasting. He would have these brother-elders and overseers note that in his ministering to the Church at Ephesus he had not coveted their silver or gold or apparel, but instead had labored with his own hands, and had thus in all things ***set before them an example of how they also*** as elders (presbyters) and overseers (bishops, ***episcopos***) ought to help the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

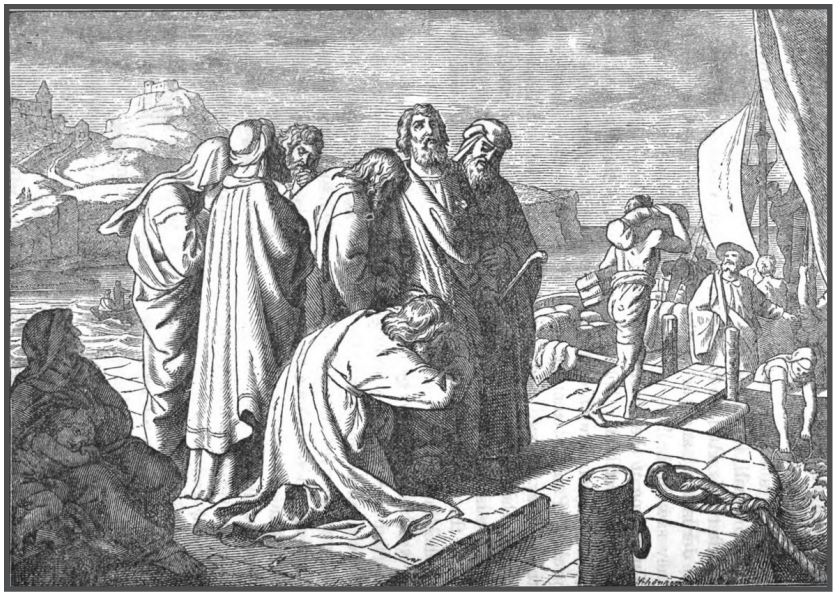
The Apostle could point thus to himself as an example of a proper servant of the Church, because he had so closely followed the example of the great Head, Jesus. It is blessed to receive, but still more blessed to give. God himself is the great Giver, continually bestowing favors upon us, and not upon the good only, but also upon the evil – even providing a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. These words of our Lord ("It is

more blessed to give than to receive") are not recorded in any of the Gospels. Dr. Philip Schaff tells us that "outside the inspired memories of the Gospels we possess the record of some twenty sayings of Jesus which have floated down to us." This quotation by the Apostle Paul is one of these, of whose authenticity we can have no doubt; and surely it is in full accord with our dear Redeemer's conduct. He emulated the Father in that he continually gave, gave, gave to others. He did not selfishly see how much comfort and ease and honor he could secure for himself, but made himself of no reputation, for our sakes, daily giving his life for the assistance of others in matters temporal, as well as spiritual, until finally he completed the sacrifice at Calvary, having given on our behalf all that he had.

If all the elders of the Church of Christ could thoroughly take to heart these noble examples of Jesus and of Paul, and could become so thoroughly enthused with the Gospel message and with the privilege of being coworkers with God that they would entirely forget themselves, it would be a great blessing for them as well as for the various little companies of the Lord's people over whom, in the Lord's providence, the holy spirit has made them overseers, to watch out for the interests of the flock and to feed them. We are not meaning to say that there are no earnest brethren today. Quite to the contrary. But we do mean to say that it is well for us to lay to heart the Apostle's earnest exhortation, that we all may be more and more faithful, more and more copies of God's dear Son, more and more like the great Apostle as regards self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of Zion.

At the close of the conference, when we may suppose the sailing of the vessel was announced, the Apostle knelt with the brethren from Ephesus, in prayer, the tenor of which may well be imagined. Then the parting took place, and doubtless the dear brethren began to realize more fully than they had ever done before what great blessings God had bestowed upon them through the Apostle's ministries, and the thought that they should never see him again filled them with sadness, and they wept as they accompanied him to the ship.

Doubtless the Apostle consoled them with the reflection that the time of partings would soon be over and the blessed eternity of union and fellowship soon begin, when they would meet not only one another, but above all meet the Redeemer himself and all the faithful in Christ Jesus. So our Lord also expressed himself on this matter, "a little while." The eighteen centuries intervening would have seemed a long while had any lived from then till now, – but since their "sleep" would be an unconscious interval, it was well that God kindly veiled their eyes and merely comforted them from his own larger standpoint of "soon," "quickly," "a little while." But now that the Kingdom is nigh, even at the door, our hearts no longer cry, How long, O Lord? but, Hallelujah! the day star is risen – the morning is here!



Paul at Miletus

THE GRACE OF GIVING – R. 5926

2 CORINTHIANS 9

"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." – Acts 20:35

CHRISTIAN benevolence – almsgiving – is the lesson inculcated in today's Study. The general disposition of the fallen nature is to give adherence or support to the strong and to expect weaker ones to rally around and uphold us. This is self-pleasing – the way of the fallen nature. But the method of the New Creature in Christ is to be the reverse of this. He is to be on the lookout for the welfare, the interests and the comforts of others, especially of those in his own family and of the weaker members of the Household of Faith. The stronger of the brethren in Christ should take pleasure in helping the weaker and the less able, and so far as possible in bringing all up to the stature of manhood in Christ.

Our Study is addressed to the Corinthian Church, and is on behalf of the Christians in and about Jerusalem. Naturally the question arises, "Why should collections have been then for the Christians in Jerusalem any more than for the Christians at Corinth? There were three reasons why this should be done: **(1)** A severe famine had prevailed in the vicinity of Jerusalem; **(2)** Jerusalem was not a commercial city, and therefore money was less plentiful there; **(3)** Apparently those in and about Jerusalem who received the Gospel were chiefly the poor.

Moreover, from the open persecution of the Truth there we can readily judge that there was also a great deal of quiet opposition to all who sympathized with the Gospel of Christ. As small shop people, they were probably boycotted; and as laborers, they were probably rejected as far as possible, except as necessity might demand their services. On the contrary, the cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia were prosperous; and as far as we may judge, the class which accepted the Gospel was in many cases the better element. For instance, we recall the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the deputy governor at Paphos; that of Dionysius, one of the professors in the University of Athens; that of Damaris, of the same city; that of Justus, of Corinth, and of Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue of that city.

BLINDED BY RELIGIOUS PRIDE

The question naturally arises, Why should the same Gospel attract the well-to-do classes in Asia Minor and Greece and repel the majority outside the poor class in Judea? The answer would seem to be that amongst the Jews, who had been long acquainted with the true God and His gracious promises of Messiah, a religious pride had developed, especially amongst the wealthy and the learned. Moreover, because their religious system was in advance of every other religious system in the world, the learned attributed a like superiority to themselves individually. They "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." – Luke 18:9.

This was the secret of Israel's blindness to the Gospel. The religious leaders and theologians were so self-conscious, and relied so implicitly upon their interpretations of the Divine promises as centering in themselves, that they could not regard the humble Nazarene and His unlearned followers except as impostors. Later, when the Gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles, the opposition of the Jewish theologians was increased; for it was utterly contrary to every thought of their religious pride that God would accept either the humble Jews or the Gentiles to His favor, and reject themselves, the leading representatives of His Cause and work. – John 7:43-53.

Amongst the Gentiles, however, the case was very different. While the illiterate masses were firmly bound by the superstition of their various religions, those who were of an honest mind amongst the better educated were quick to discern that many features of their own religion were merely superstitions. Probably they had been somewhat attracted to the Jewish religion as being much more reasonable than their own; for we find that the Gentiles readily resorted to the Jewish synagogues. But the Jewish religion would necessarily be unsatisfactory to them, since it would appear to be very narrow, limiting the Divine blessings in a special manner to Israelites only – a people whom the Greeks considered rather inferiors in the arts of that time. But the Gospel, throwing wide open the door to those who desired righteousness – of every nation, people, kindred and tongue – would naturally commend itself to the class whom we are describing as being the most reasonable explanation of the Jewish doctrines and their grand eventual outcome, the meaning of which had long been hidden.

THE BENEFITS OF SYSTEMATIC CHARITY

At all events, the saints at Jerusalem were poorer than were the saints at Corinth. Therefore it was appropriate that the Apostle should suggest to the latter the propriety of sending a gift to the former. Living at a time when the conveniences for transferring money were very inferior to the very poorest known today, the various congregations could send their gifts only at the hand of the Apostle when he should go to Jerusalem the following year.

St. Paul's words intimate that the suggestion which he had made to the Corinthian brethren nearly a year before had been well received, and the collections zealously entered upon. For this reason it was superfluous for him to write in this connection any of the particulars respecting the necessity for this collection. But he hints to them that there was a bare possibility that the work zealously begun a year before might not have been patiently carried out; and that after he had boasted somewhat to others of their love and zeal for the Lord, he would regret, when he came to them en route to Jerusalem, if it should be found that, after all, they had failed to have their donation ready.

In his previous letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle had suggested methodical charity, saying, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given instructions to the Churches in Galatia, even so do ye. On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." – 1 Corinthians 16:1,2.

It was the Apostle's experience, as it is the experience of all thoughtful people, that systematic charity is better than spasmodic giving. Not only is the result generally larger, but the influence upon the giver is more beneficial; for it keeps before the mind an object, a service to be rendered as unto the Lord. With many, almost the only opportunity for serving the Lord's Cause is that of contributing money. Of course, where a consecrated child of God can do so, it is far better that he should give to the saints after the manner of St. Paul and his traveling associates – giving spiritual gifts and blessings, either by public preaching or by house-to-house visiting – presenting the Truth either by the printed page or by tongue or both.

But there are those so circumstanced in life through lack of talent or of strength or of opportunity – hindered by prior mortgages upon their time in the way of family obligations – that practically their only chance for serving the Lord and manifesting their love for Him is through their gifts to His Cause and to His people. For such to be deprived of the opportunity of exercising themselves in the Lord's service in this manner, either through lack of a case needing their assistance or through lack of instruction respecting this method of Divine service, would be to deprive

them of an important opportunity of service, and correspondingly to deprive them of the blessings which follow every service rendered to the Lord.

LIBERALITY AN INDEX OF LOVE

We notice, therefore, that the Apostle felt very free to recommend to the Church the grace of giving and even to press upon them the fact that their liberality, in proportion to their ability, would in a large degree be an index of their love for the Lord and for the Gospel. But here we note, in contrast, the fact that the Apostle did not ask alms of these believers when first they received the Lord's grace, lest they should in any degree get the impression that the Gospel was being preached from mercenary motives – for filthy lucre's sake. Accordingly we find that rather than mention money the Apostle preached to these very same Corinthians for more than a year without even a suggestion as to remuneration; that rather than be chargeable to any, he labored with his own hands at his trade of tent-making. – 2 Corinthians 11:7-9.

Let us also note the change which the full appreciation of the Gospel wrought upon the believers at Corinth. At first they were so negligent of their privilege that seemingly they never even thought of volunteering financial assistance to the Apostle while he was serving them by the labor of his own hands and receiving some assistance from believers in other places. But after the grace of God had entered more fully into their hearts, they began to appreciate the value of the Truth which they had received and to realize that it had brought them priceless blessings of hope, joy, faith and character. Then they had a zeal, a "forwardness," to do something financially in the Lord's service.

And now that the Apostle was absent from them, and after his course had proved to them that he sought not their money but themselves, to do them good, he felt free to draw their attention to the great blessing which would result from liberality in the Lord's Cause in proportion to their ability and love. To impress this matter, he gave them a parable, saying, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." This reminds us of the proverb, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is proper, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Proverbs 11:24,25.) The evident lesson is that the Lord is pleased to see His people cultivate breadth of heart as well as of mind – generosity in proportion to their knowledge of Him and of His generosity.

OUR LORD'S ESTIMATE OF OUR GIFTS

The Scriptures nowhere declare that cases of absolute privation amongst the Lord's people are proofs that at some time in their past life, when possessed of means, they failed to use a portion of it in charity, in the Lord's service. But the inspired words above quoted come very close to giving this lesson. At all events, it is profitable that we lay this testimony to heart and that every child of God henceforth shall be earnestly careful that out of the blessings of the Lord coming to us day by day some measure be carefully, prayerfully and lovingly laid aside as seed to be sown in the Lord's service according to the best wisdom and judgment which He will give us.

How many have such carefulness for themselves, either in using every penny as fast as it comes or in being so interested in laying by for the outworking of future plans, that they feel that they can spare nothing for charity! How many such can afterward see that they made a great mistake in so doing! When their accumulations suddenly vanish, either through sickness or through accident or bank failure or otherwise, then they have good reason to regret that they sowed no "seed" after the manner described by the Apostle in Verse 6 of today's Study.

Our Lord showed us how He measures our gifts – that He esteems them not according to the amount given, but chiefly according to the spirit which prompts the gift – when He drew attention to the poor widow who cast two mites into the Temple treasury. (Luke 21:1-4.) From the standpoint of His estimation, that poor widow had cast in a larger sum than had any of the wealthy who had given merely out of their abundance, and not to such an extent that they felt it. How many of the Lord's people would be more "fat" spiritually today, if they would give attention to the exercise of this talent, this opportunity for service, we cannot say. The Lord alone knows. But today's Study makes it incumbent upon us to point out a privilege in this direction which is within the reach of the very poorest of the Lord's people.

A THANK-OFFERING TO THE LORD

Seldom is it necessary to caution people against over-much giving. Yet in some instances such caution is proper; and in some instances in Scripture giving has been restrained. No one should give to the extent of causing privation to those dependent upon him. Nor should any one give to such extent as to bring upon himself financial bankruptcy and cause losses to others. The Apostolic rule for giving we have already quoted. The "laying by on the first day of the week" should be general – "according as the Lord hath prospered him." The degree of our prosperity should be the measure of our charity. Upon this, as upon every subject, the Scriptures inculcate the spirit of a sound mind.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Gifts bestowed in any other than a cheerful spirit might just as well not be given; for they will bring no blessing. The Lord does not appreciate such giving. In His estimation it has no "sweet odor." To be appreciated of the Lord, the gift must be a thank-offering, prompted by a realization of our debt of everlasting gratitude to Him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift. And to such, the Apostle assures us, "***God is able to make all grace abound***." Whoever gives anything in the Divine service – time, talent, strength, money or influence – will find himself proportionately abounding in the different graces; for such are in the right attitude of heart to grow in grace.

The Apostle seems to imply that such will have "sufficiency in all things," as well as be able to "abound in every good work." Sufficiency may not mean luxury and every comfort; but "all sufficiency" is gained always where there is "godliness with contentment." In proof that he is inculcating no new theory respecting the Divine care over those who are seeking to scatter to others a portion of the blessings that come to them, whether temporal or spiritual, the Apostle quotes from Psalm 112:9.

In Verse 11, the Apostle speaks of "being enriched in everything." We are not to understand him to mean that all of the Lord's people will be enriched financially. St. Paul himself was an example of the fact that the Lord's people do not become wealthy. He is speaking of the enrichment of the heart. In another place he speaks of himself and his colaborers in the Gospel work, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Corinthians 6:10.) These faithful servants of God made many rich in hope, rich in faith, rich in love and in all the various concomitant graces which these qualities imply.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the grandest Example of self-denial in the interests of others. He was rich in the possession of the spiritual nature with all its glory and honor. Yet for our sakes He became poor, taking the human nature in order that He might redeem mankind. To this end He surrendered life itself at Calvary, that through His sacrifice we might become rich – possessed of Divine favor and the riches of Divine grace in Christ – even joint-heirship with Him who now is our exalted Lord at the right hand of Divine Majesty. But to attain this joint-heirship with Him, we must study to be like Him, to have His Spirit and to share with others whatever He may give us of either

temporal or spiritual favors – either to feed or to clothe others (particularly those of the Household of Faith) temporally or spiritually, as circumstances may dictate.

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift!" That Gift is our Savior, our Redeemer. (John 3:16.) In this connection it is impossible for us to tell the riches of Divine grace toward us – the numberless blessings and mercies which are ours through our Lord. He represents to us the very fulness of every Divine provision for our eternal welfare. As the Apostle elsewhere says, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity bodily." (Colossians 2:9.) As yet, only the Church can now give thanks to God for His unspeakable Gift. But by and by the whole world of mankind will be in a condition to recognize that Gift and to render thanks. When, at the close of the Messianic Reign for the restoration of the Adamic race to their original perfection, all wilful sinners shall have been destroyed, then "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, to the glory of God." Then every creature in Heaven, on earth and in the sea shall be heard saying, "Praise, glory, honor, dominion and might be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb, forever!" for the Unspeakable Gift.

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,
11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.
12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God,
13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men,
14 and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you.
15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:10-15

St. Paul Rescued from the Multitude, by Gustave Dore (1832-1883)

30 And all the city was disturbed, and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. 31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. 35 When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

Acts 21:30-36

"LOVE AS BRETHREN" – R. 3182

ACTS 21:1-12

"The will of the Lord be done." – Acts 21:14

BROTHERHOOD in Christ is the closest of all relationships, and many incidents in the Apostle's journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem illustrate this brotherhood relationship most beautifully. In a preceding lesson we had the account of the parting of Paul and his company from the elders at Ephesus, and of their loving demonstration and tears and prayers. The first verse of this lesson says, "After we were gotten from them," etc., – the words "gotten from" signifying, torn ourselves away, as though the hearts of all were so thoroughly united that the separation meant the breaking of very tender ties. And so we find it to be today, with the Lord's similarly consecrated people. They become attached to each other in a manner that formal creeds and confessions in earthly bundles, or denominations, do not bind. Each one who is united to Christ feels a special interest in, and sympathy for, each fellow-member, so that, as the Apostle says, if one member rejoice all are glad, and if one member be in trouble or affliction or sorrow all are sympathetically affected. This will be noticeable in proportion as the law of love develops and abounds in each member. The little love in the beginning of Christian character will expand and deepen, filling all the avenues of the heart, and sanctifying them in a pure, unselfish, holy love.

The voyage from Miletus to Patara was probably in a small coasting vessel. At the latter port they found a larger seagoing vessel, on which they made the through journey to Tyre. At the latter place the Apostle and his companions hunted up some believers, whom they previously knew resided there. This is another evidence of affection and interest. Apparently the number of the interested was small, just as today; the twos and threes, sixes and sevens, are much more numerous than larger companies. The fewness did not hinder the Apostle from seeking them out, that he might encourage and strengthen them. Rather, we may say that in some respects the appreciation of the fact that the Lord's jewels are not numerous makes them all the more precious. In this little church were some who evidently had the gift of prophecy, as it was granted in the early church – foretelling future events, just as with the prophets of old, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., except that those of the earlier dispensation spoke evidently in a more public manner, while these latter had messages especially for the Apostle and the Church. The message that came to them was to the effect that the Apostle at Jerusalem would be caused to suffer; would be imprisoned, maltreated, etc., and on this account they urged him not to go. The Apostle tells us previously, that the spirit witnessed in various places that bonds and imprisonment awaited him; but, nevertheless, he understood it to be the divine will that he should go to Jerusalem, and that, hence, he would not hesitate, knowing that the Lord was able to work out his own good purposes, if he were obedient. We are not to understand this testimony of these local prophets to be a contradiction of the Apostle's understanding of the same holy spirit's leading; the one teaching him that he should go to Jerusalem, the other teaching that he should not go to Jerusalem. We are rather to understand that these prophets merely had from God a revelation to the effect that Paul would suffer violence in the city of the great King, and that on the strength of this information they themselves advised the Apostle not to go. But Paul, without disrespect, or in any degree impugning the truthfulness of their message, drew a different lesson from it – understood the Lord's message differently. He saw that this meant a trial of his faith, his zeal, his perseverance, and that for him to yield to these suggestions, through fear, would have been an evidence of his lack of confidence in God, since the Lord had himself revealed to him that he should go up to Jerusalem.

It may be wondered why the Apostle would feel so urgently desirous of going to Jerusalem, knowing in advance what to expect. We reply that he evidently realized that the work amongst the Gentiles was growing considerably, and that there was a feeling that there was a more or less clearly defined separation of interest and sympathy as between believing Gentiles and believing Jews, and that part of the Apostle's object in this visit was to counteract this tendency and to help cement the Church as one. He was taking with him contributions from the various churches amongst the Gentiles to the poor of the larger congregation at Jerusalem, a thank-offering to the Lord for the good things which had been sent to them through their Jewish brethren. These offerings would attest the love and fellowship of the Gentile believers, and help to convince the brethren at Jerusalem that those abroad had one and the same spirit as those with whom they were better acquainted in Palestine. Then again, in Paul's company were several Gentile representatives, as it were, of the grace of God amongst the Gentiles – noble brethren, whose meekness, patience, gentleness, long-suffering; brotherly kindness and various fruits of the spirit fully attested the work of grace amongst the Gentiles to be the same as amongst the Jews. Furthermore, the Apostle realized that some had, intentionally or unintentionally, misrepresented his position – claiming that he was an opponent of the Law and of the Jews. He was an opponent of neither; he loved the Jews as his brethren, and he loved the Law of Moses, realizing that it was just, perfect and good, and so great and wonderful a law that no fallen human being could possibly live up to all of its requisites, and that, therefore, whoever would be justified could not be justified by the Law, through obedience to it, but must be justified according to God's arrangement – justified by faith. During this visit he hoped to be able to show that he had no disrespect for the Law, but that as Jesus magnified it, held it up, and showed how great and wonderful a law it was, he, Paul, magnified the Law of God, the Law of Moses, and showed that it could be kept only reckonedly, by any of the fallen race, and then only by those who could have imputed to them the righteousness of Christ to make up for their blemishes and shortcomings.

Furthermore, he foresaw the complete fall of his nation from all divine favor into unbelief and a great time of trouble, just at hand, and he, doubtless, desired to make one further effort amongst the Jews to give a final testimony that might be helpful to some, hoping that his experience in the many years amongst the Gentiles might have brought him greater wisdom in knowing how to present the gracious message. We know that these were his sentiments respecting the condition of the Jews, because his Epistle to the Romans had already been written – after he left Ephesus, presumably at Corinth, – and in that Epistle to the Romans it will be remembered that in the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters the Apostle clearly sets forth the stumbling of the whole Jewish nation, only a remnant taking hold upon the Lord Jesus, the rest being blinded until the fulness of the Gentiles should be come in. We remember his explanation of the olive tree, whose root was the promise made to Abraham, and whose branches were the individuals of the Jewish nation. The breaking off of these branches from divine favor left opportunity for grafting into this olive tree – of divine favor and participation in the covenant made with Abraham – of all of the Gentiles who should heartily accept the Redeemer. The Apostle had all these thoughts, then, clearly in his mind. He had no expectation of being able to turn Israel as a nation, but he did wish them to discern his love for them, and his earnest desire to assist them, that peradventure he might remove from the minds of the Apostles not only any prejudice they might, as Jews, have had against the Gentile converts, but that, additionally, he might assist some who had not yet made a decision, not yet gone into the condition of darkness, stumbling, etc. Here again love as brethren is manifest. The Apostle loved the Jewish nation with an intense love, as is witnessed by his declaration,

"I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. 9:3.) Not that he would wish to suffer eternal torture for them, nor yet that he would wish to be cut off in the Second Death for them; but that he was willing to be cut off from participation in the glories of the Kingdom, as a member of the body of Christ, if thereby he could have brought his nation into that glorious position, the first right to which belonged to them as a people, until they rejected it.

The stay with the little company at Tyre lasted seven days, while their vessel was unloading its cargo and reloading another. As we read the account of how the disciples at Tyre, with their wives and children, accompanied the Apostle and his companions to the ship, and all kneeled in prayer on the shore, we say to ourselves that the spirit of discipleship was evidently the same everywhere in the early Church – just as warm and just as expressive among these probably less cultured ones at Tyre, as it was with the elders of the Church of Ephesus at Miletus. And we are glad to say that the household of faith today has many of the same characteristics of intense love for the brethren, even though they have not previously seen each other. We frequently think of this striking likeness when some of the friends, and sometimes their children, accompany us to the railway station to say "Good-bye." Truly by one spirit we are all baptized into the one body, and whoever lacks this spirit of fellowship, of oneness, is quite likely to become more and more cool and indifferent, until he loses the truth entirely; and whoever cultivates this spirit of fellowship and love for all the members of the body of Christ will find it growing, intensifying.

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

Mrs. M. J. Preston has put into poetic form the thought that we should speak our kind sentiments, and look them, and perform our kind services to one another, while we have the opportunity – and not let these opportunities go by, and leave our expressions until our friends are cold in death. She says: –

"What use for rope if it be not flung
Till the swimmer's grasp to the rock has clung?
What help in a comrade's bugle blast
When the peril of Alpine heights is past?
What need that the stirring paeon roll
When the runner is safe within the goal?
What worth is eulogy's blandest breath
When whispered in ears that are hushed in death?
No, no! if you have but a word of cheer
Speak it while I am alive to hear."

Leaving Tyre their vessel soon came to Ptolemais. There were a few friends at Ptolemais, and the day was spent in their company, and probably the partings again were full of expressions of sympathy; and then Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine, was reached. Philip the evangelist, one of the seven deacons originally appointed at Jerusalem, and who did a good work, it will be remembered, with the Ethiopian eunuch and at Samaria, was at this time apparently making Caesarea his home. We have no definite statement respecting the number of believers at the place, but evidently most of these groups of the Lord's people were few in number. Five of the Church, at least, were of Philip's own family, for he had four daughters, who are spoken of as unmarried sisters which did prophesy. It is difficult for us to determine whether or not they prophesied of future events, because this word "prophesy" is also used to designate public speaking without reference to foreseeing. Apparently the Apostle's company tarried more days at Caesarea than they had intended, for finding that they would not be in time for the Passover the Apostle and his company were not in special haste to reach Jerusalem before the Pentecost season. It was while they tarried in the latter place that Agabus, a brother in the Lord, who had delivered important prophecies

of future events, came to Caesarea and finding Paul took his girdle and therewith bound his own feet and hands, and declared that thus Paul would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. This form of prophecy, illustrating by signs, was not uncommon to the Jews. It will be remembered that Isaiah and Jeremiah and others of the prophets similarly acted out parts of their messages – thus, doubtless, making them more impressive.

This last testimony from Agabus seems to have affected all of Paul's companions who, taking a view similar to that taken by others, now joined in a general appeal to the Apostle not to go further on the journey – to give it up, not to run foolishly into danger. His reply shows us how thoroughly convinced he felt that it was the Lord's will, and that his dear friends were conscientious, he does not for an instant dispute. His words are most touching: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" Here again we are reminded of the words of the poet: –

"We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear."

But the Apostle was firm. He had not started on this journey without the full conviction and assurance that it was in the Lord's providence that he should take it; and he was not to be daunted by any of the circumstances that might arise. He well knew that all the powers of darkness would assail him in vain, except as the Lord should permit, and he well knew also that the Lord would permit nothing to occur that would be to his real disadvantage. He would, therefore, go on conscientiously and courageously, and finish the work that the Father had given him to do. He would be sustained by his faith in the divine supervision of all his affairs, just as our Lord Jesus was; who, we remember, said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." – John 19:11.

There are few such noble characters as Paul's, unmoved by threats or fears, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and ready not only to be bound for Christ's sake, but to die, if such should be the arrangement of the Lord's providence on his behalf. Let us each and all emulate this noble example of one who followed so closely in the footsteps of our Lord and Master. Let us be strong, not only in our consecration, but also in the taking of all the steps that the Lord's providence may lead us to take.

The Apostle's argument was successful. He infused new courage into the hearts of his colaborers, and they apparently resolved that if he were about to die or suffer they, too, would rejoice if the will of God respecting them eventuated in their death; and if they did not suffer personally they would, at least, have the honor of being companions of those who were misused for Christ's sake, and thus be to some extent the sharers in the blessing promised. (Heb. 10:32,33.) The Apostle's companions saw the matter as he did, that it was the Lord's will; and they resolved to bow to it, notwithstanding that the Lord had given them information in advance which would have permitted them to turn back, or seek to save their lives. There is a very valuable lesson for all of the Lord's dear people in this word, "The will of the Lord be done." We should each seek to know the will of the Lord. If first of all our consecration be complete, even unto death, it will mean that we are seeking to know what the will of the Lord is respecting us, and it will mean that as we learn his will we will do it at any cost. It will mean that we will be on the outlook for the Lord's providences in all of our affairs, realizing that nothing happens by chance to those who are in covenant relationship with God, as members of the body of Christ, – that all things must work together for good to them. A fuller realization of the divine care over the elect would, doubtless, often guide our steps aright by directing the eye of faith to expect the Lord's leadings and to look for them in all matters that are of any importance.

PAUL'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM – R. 2222

ACTS 21:1-15

"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." – Acts 21:1

THE date on which the Apostle Paul, after his interview with the elders of the Church at Ephesus at Miletus, resumed his journey toward Jerusalem, is calculated by those who have made a special study of the subject, to have been Monday, April 24, A.D. 58. He wished to reach Jerusalem about the time of the Passover, but apparently was somewhat delayed enroute, and it is supposed he did not reach there until May 17 – Pentecost day, that year.

The expression "after we had gotten from them," would seem to refer to the affectionate parting between Paul and those who accompanied him, and the Elders of Ephesus with whom evidently Timothy remained. As noticed in the previous lesson, "they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing:" so that they were finally obliged to break away from them, to get aboard their vessel. There is nothing very special in the account of the journey: it was in a sailing vessel, slow and tedious and rather uninteresting. Probably the master and crew of that small vessel had little idea how much the value of their ship's burden was enhanced by the addition of Paul and his company. Little did they know how honorable a servant and ambassador of the Most High was their guest and passenger, and how he and his associates carried with them the gospel of Divine grace, a pearl of great price. "The world knoweth us not, even as it knew him not." Paul's company seems to have consisted **(1)** of Luke, the writer of this account, who uses the pronoun ***we***; **(2)** Trophimus (verse 29); **(3)** Aristarchus (Acts 27:2).

Paul's experience in the city of Tyre serves to show us the bond of sympathy and Christian love which prevailed in the early Church. Apparently Paul and his companions were unaware that there were believers at Tyre, but, no doubt providentially, they found some; and so close was the bond of Christian sympathy that the finding of them insured the finding of fast and loving friends. We may imagine the blessed experiences of the little group of believers during the seven days of the Apostle's stay with them. We are not told what was done, but from the character of the Apostle we may judge with considerable accuracy, for "a good fountain sends forth sweet waters" only. He surely did not waste time in telling them of his many travels and the various scenes in foreign lands. We may be sure also that, having the spirit of love shed abroad in his heart he did not indulge in "***gossip***" in respect to the Lord's people in the various places he had visited: he had come under "the royal law" of Love, which neither thinketh nor speaketh ill of his neighbor; and we may be sure he would be doubly careful of what he would say to or about the Lord's "brethren." Paul had a grander mission than this, and a mind too noble to permit him to be either a "busybody in other men's matters" or a gossiper. He had more important business: As he elsewhere expressed himself, "This one thing I do," – the Father's business. Forgetting the things which were behind, and pressing forward to those things which were before, he ran with patience the race set before him in the gospel, for the prize of the high calling; looking unto Jesus as both the Author and Finisher of his faith.

We may therefore know assuredly that those seven days were profitably employed by the Apostle in talking over with the Church at Tyre the gracious plan of God, his precepts and his promises to those who love and obey him. The impression made indicates that the Apostle had become a lifelong friend of the Tyre believers, so much so that they were

all loth to part, and husbands, wives and children accompanied Paul and his associates clear outside the city limits, and they parted with prayer. Where such holiness of heart, singleness of purpose and devotion to the Lord are found, there cannot be found in the same individual a contrary spirit; and all who are in close company with such a Christian will be profitted and helped and kept thereby.

A briefer visit was made at Ptolemais, the next stop being with Philip, the evangelist, at Cesarea. We are not surprised to find a Church at Cesarea, for it was here that the gospel to the Gentiles first was preached; this being the residence of Cornelius the first Gentile convert. (Acts 10:1.) We may reasonably suppose that a man like Cornelius who, before receiving the gospel, "feared God with all his house" and "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway," on receiving the good tidings of great joy would become ten fold more zealous than he had ever before been. That the Church at Cesarea was of considerable size is evident from the fact that Philip made it his head quarters, and that this was the third visit which Paul had made to this city during his travels. – See Acts 9:30; 18:22.

The statement of verse nine to the effect that Philip had four virgin daughters "which did prophesy" is worthy of notice. The word "prophesy" is used in many instances in the New Testament to describe public or semi public speaking and not always a foretelling of future events. It is somewhat difficult to know which view should be taken in the present case, because in the next verse Agabus is mentioned as a prophet – a foreteller of future events – possessing the gift of prophesying. But whichever view of the word prophesying we apply to the daughters of Philip, the intimation would be that women were recognized of the Lord in connection with the ministry of the gospel in the early Church. In attempting to reach safe and sound Scriptural conclusions on this subject, it is proper that we take into consideration all the statements and all the facts bearing upon it. While the Apostle writes most positively "I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man," he also says that if women in the Church pray or prophesy, it should be with their heads covered; and thus we see that his other statement that "I suffer not a woman to teach" must be understood in a qualified sense and in connection with the latter part of that statement – not to usurp teaching functions over and above the men. We find, nevertheless, that the Apostle greatly appreciated the co-operation of female believers, and that he speaks of them in the highest terms of appreciation.

In all this Paul followed closely in the footsteps of the Master who, tho he appreciated very highly and specially "loved" Martha and the Marys and the several honorable women among his disciples, and altho he privileged one of them to be the first to know of his resurrection, and tho he sent the message of his resurrection by one of them to Peter and the other disciples, nevertheless he did not make use of women in connection with the public ministry of the gospel. He not only chose males for the twelve apostles, but also subsequently for the seventy evangelists sent forth to declare him and the Kingdom of God at hand. It behooves us to note the divine leadings on this and on all other subjects and to follow as closely as circumstances will permit in the same footsteps, – whether we see or do not see, positively, the philosophy of the inspired methods. It may be argued that women were more ignorant then and are more intelligent now, but this would not account for the matter satisfactorily, because we know that the masses of the men were correspondingly ignorant of literature and philosophy at that time: as for instance in our Lord's case, the people in general marveled that ***he could read***, and very few men except amongst the Scribes had the necessary education to read, or any use for such an education, since books were very rare and costly.

Without offering any reason why this should be so, without attempting to give any explanation of the Divine course, we

can very safely afford to wait for the few remaining years, until "that which is perfect is come," without attempting to change in any particular degree or even to greatly modify the methods instituted by our Lord, and generally practiced by the early Church. Especially so when we notice that Satan's method seems to be along diametrically opposite lines: he uses females chiefly – for Spiritualistic mediums, for Christian Science instructors and healers, and as apostles of Theosophy.

On the contrary, we have no sympathy with the sentiment apparently held by some brethren, that the sisters of the Church are to be entirely ignored, and that any suggestions which they may offer respecting the Word of the Lord should be despised. But, while recognizing certain facts and principles on this subject laid down in the Scriptures, all should remember that it is a part of the Christian duty to be kind and courteous to ***all***, overbearing and dogmatic toward ***none***, male or female. And furthermore, let us remember that, while the outward proprieties acceptable to the Lord, may distinguish the more public ministers as for men, and the more private ministries for women, yet amongst those who are faithful to their appointed ministries, as the Lord has been pleased to arrange for them, there is no personal discrimination as between the sex in our Lord's love and estimation; "there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male or female," but all are one in Christ Jesus. – Gal. 3:28.

Distinctions as to nationality, freedom or sex, while they may be properly enough recognized in their relationship with the affairs of this present time, have no bearing whatever upon our Lord's love for us, nor upon our love for each other, nor upon the conditions of the future, when all these ***distinctions will be removed***; that which is perfect having then come, national distinctions and different degrees of freedom, as well as sexual differences will all be obliterated. So then, while under divine providence a bondman may not be granted the opportunity to render as great a service in the Lord's cause as if he were a free man, while a very poor man might not have the same opportunities for service as if he were made a steward of wealth, and while the sisters may not under divine commission take quite so prominent a place in the public ministry of the truth as the brethren, nevertheless each one who is faithful in the use of the opportunities which the Lord has given him will be blessed according to his faithfulness to the Lord's arrangement; – ***as greatly***, we may suppose, as tho equally faithful in the use of larger opportunities. And each one should be zealous to render all the service possible to the Master, in harmony with the station and conditions under which he has been placed through divine providence. The bondman is not to feel that the only way in which he can serve the Lord acceptably would be by becoming a master instead of a servant: nor are the sisters to suppose that the only way in which to be acceptable and to show their zeal would be by usurping authority over the man, contrary to the Divine order in nature, and as set forth in the Scriptures. On the contrary, thankfulness and gratitude to God is to be the ruling sentiment of our lives; and our zeal is to be, to use every opportunity which the Lord shall bring to our hands, rather than to endeavor to alter his arrangements in the mistaken thought we might thus render him a greater or more acceptable service.

The Agabus mentioned in the tenth verse had already been manifested before the Church, as specially used of the Lord in foretelling the famine which came upon not only Palestine, but a large part of the civilized world at that time. (Acts 11:27.) His prophecy therefore of bonds and imprisonment awaiting Paul at Jerusalem would have great weight with all the Church. He accompanied it with signs, as was common with the prophets of olden time. (Jer. 13:5; 19:10,11; Ezek. 4:1-3; 5:1-4, etc.) Believing implicitly that Agabus (as he declared) spoke as a mouthpiece of the holy spirit, the friends began to importune the Apostle to discontinue his journey to Jerusalem; even his companions joining in the request. But Paul was fully convinced

that it was the Lord's will that he should go to Jerusalem and could not be hindered from so doing. As he had told the Elders of Ephesus that the holy spirit witnessed to him that bonds and imprisonments awaited him at Jerusalem, so now he was not surprised when through Agabus came another intimation to the same effect. His noble answer to the fears and entreaties of the brethren was in the sublimely courageous and yet beautifully sympathetic language of our Golden Text. O how important it is that we should all learn the lesson, not to be moved from faithfulness to the Lord and his commands; neither by the tears and entreaties of friends nor by the frowns and threats of our foes.

"Where duty calls or danger, be never lacking there."

Paul's firmness would no doubt be misunderstood by some, to be obstinacy and self-will: in reality however it was the very reverse of these. Self-will in him was completely subordinated to the divine will; and instead, therefore, of its being obstinacy it was ***faithfulness*** that he exhibited. His determination carried the day, and the others acquiesced, saying not, Paul's will be done; but, recognizing that Paul was faithfully carrying out the Divine plan they said, "The will of the Lord be done."

"THE WILL OF THE LORD BE DONE" – R. 4466

ACTS 21:1-17

THIS lesson indicates to us how the Apostle and others of the early Church were subjected to difficulties, disappointments and opposition, as we of today are. The fact that the Lord's power was with them, the gifts of tongues, of miracles, of healing, the casting out of devils, etc., was offset by the other fact that their course of life was not, by any means, smooth. Even when on missions of mercy and peace, even when not doing evangelistic work, they were directly battling with the Adversary and his forces of darkness. Leaving Miletus, St. Paul and his companions were dependent on natural laws and regulations. No swift yacht happened to sight them and take them on board and carry them to their destination. Instead, they were obliged to take a cargo sailboat, which stopped here and there in the interest of its business, quite regardless of the important Jew and his eight companions aboard. Truly surprised will some of these sailors be when, by and by, during the Millennium, they will come forth and be brought to a knowledge of the Truth and learn that once they had the privilege of carrying the noble St. Paul. We may be sure that any acts of kindness performed to him or his companions will be duly remembered and rewarded, in harmony with our Lord's promise that a reward shall be given to those who give even a cup of cold water to even one of the least of his disciples.

We are to remember that "the world knoweth us not, even as it knew him not." If humble of mind we shall not expect great things for ourselves or special attentions from those with whom we are in company – nor from the Lord should we expect miracles. Rather we should esteem that a miracle of the Lord's grace is manifested in us – in the favor which has brought to us the good tidings and the privilege of being its servants – ambassadors of God. Besides, under these conditions, walking by faith and not by sight, we shall doubtless make better progress as New Creatures in character development than if the Lord carried us along on flowery beds of ease without storm, without opposition, without difficulties. The difficulties call forth faith

and draw our hearts to the great Fountain of blessing, and thus are amongst the "all things" working for our spiritual welfare.

While the ship was unloading her cargo at Tyre, St. Paul and his companions looked up some of the Truth people, with whom they had evidently a special season of fellowship during the seven days of waiting. This reminds us of how the Lord's followers in the present time love to meet the Pilgrims on their journeys and how the Pilgrims with yearning hearts seek for those who know and love the Redeemer, "Even as many as the Lord our God has called." Here the Apostle got a message from some of his friends urging him not to go to Jerusalem; but he continued his journey, nevertheless. When leaving the friends of Tyre, men, women and children accompanied them to the ship, for the city evidently was at a little distance from the dock. Then on the beach together, in communion with the Lord and with each other, they asked a blessing upon those who went and upon those who remained. How this reminds us further of present experiences and the love, the fellowship, the interest which we have in each other – stronger than any earthly tie!

A stop of another day afforded another opportunity to meet the brethren at Ptolemais – another One Day Convention, we may be sure! The next stopping place was at Caesarea, at the home of Philip, the Evangelist, who was one of the seven deacons chosen at Jerusalem – the martyr Stephen being another of the seven selected for the care of the temporalities of the Church at the time when an unsuccessful attempt at communism was permitted of the Lord as a demonstration of the inexpediency of such an arrangement in the Church.

Incidentally, it is mentioned that Philip had four virgin daughters "which did prophecy," but just what is signified by this we may not surely know. We are not to assume hastily that these four young women were public teachers in the Church, in the face of the Apostle's clear statements on the subject. They may have had some public occupation along the lines of public speaking or teaching – possibly they were school teachers. The teaching of that time was not, as now, through the study of books, but by oral presentations or prophecy. We prefer to understand the passage in this light and in harmony with the general teaching of the Scriptures, which everywhere commits to the brethren the public teaching in the Church.

"SONS AND DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY"

The marginal reference in our common Bible identifies this reference to these four virgins with the prophecy of Joel, "Your sons and daughters shall prophecy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." We see no connection between the prophecy and this statement respecting Philip's four daughters. Indeed, there is not even a suggestion that they had made a consecration of themselves to the Lord or received the holy Spirit. The fact that they were virgins would imply nothing of this kind. Incidentally, it may be well for us here to point out in few words what we do understand the words of the Prophet Joel to signify.

St. Peter identifies the prophecy as a whole with the Pentecostal blessing upon the Church ten days after our Lord's ascension. This does not mean, however, that the prophecy was fulfilled as a whole there. St. Peter says this which they witnessed was that, or a portion of that of which the Prophet Joel spake. Is there any indication that the holy Spirit was poured out upon the sons and daughters of believers at Pentecost? None whatever! It came only upon the consecrated believers themselves. Do all the young Christians who receive the holy Spirit have special experiences in seeing visions? And do all old, experienced Christians have special experiences in dreaming dreams? Assuredly not! Properly not! The prophecy divides into two parts; one relating to this Gospel Age and the other relating to the Millennial Age. The

Lord hid the understanding of the matter to some extent by referring to the Millennial Age blessings first and to this Age and its blessings afterward.

The two ages and their blessings are distinguished, therefore, by the expressions, "In those days," as signifying the Gospel Age, and "After those days," as signifying the Millennial Age. We are still in the Gospel Age, styled "In those days." And we still have the blessings promised in this Age, namely, the bestowment of the holy spirit upon God's servants and handmaidens regardless of age, sex or national distinction. This blessing began at Pentecost and will close with the anointing of the last member of the Body of Christ. Then will begin the other part of the blessed promise, namely, "After those days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." This blessing surely does not apply to the present time; and just as surely it will have fulfilment under the ministration of the Millennial Kingdom. Then will come the time when "Your sons and your daughters shall prophecy," shall teach. That will not be a teaching ***in*** the Church, nor ***of*** the Church, but a teaching of the world by the world, under the supervision of the glorified Christ on the spirit plane, and the perfected Ancient Worthies on the human plane as the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom.

Now notice the expression, "Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions." We prefer a different translation, which, we believe, gives the intended thought, namely, "Your young men will see the glorious visions (of Restitution, blessings, etc., in process of fulfilment) of which your ancient men dreamed (the things respecting which they vaguely hoped and dimly understood and greatly longed for)."

"WEEP AND BREAK MINE HEART"

Agabus was possessed of the spirit of prophecy, after the manner of the ancient prophets, so that he foretold future events. He was well known to the Church. It was he who had prophesied the great famine throughout the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. (Acts 11:28.) He came to Caesarea while St. Paul was there, and, taking St. Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet and declared that the holy Spirit testified that thus the Jews at Jerusalem would bind St. Paul, the owner of the girdle, and deliver him to the Gentiles. This prophecy was fully in harmony with other predictions of harm to the Apostle. No wonder, then, that his friends who accompanied him and others at Caesarea urged him to forego the visit and thus escape the harm indicated to be performed if he went. Ordinarily we would have supposed that the advice was good and that it were not wise to go into difficulty. But St. Paul apparently had some other advice from the Lord, under which he was operating – something compulsory upon him, which led him to brave anything to fulfil his duty. We are not to think of the Apostle as stoically, coldly going into this trouble. Such a thought is dismissed when we notice his reply to his insistent friends. Full of feeling for them, as well as for himself, he replied, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Heroic words! Noble sentiments! Faithfulness personified!

Evidently the Lord was testing the Apostle, developing in him character, stability, faithfulness. Not that he did not have these qualities before, but that all these experiences would tend to deepen and fix that character. He intimates to us that he went to Jerusalem under a vow, under some solemn pledge to the Lord, in faithful performance of some duty. The question now was, Would he keep this vow? Would he fulfill the obligation or would he be turned aside from it by fear of what man might do to him or by the entreaties of friends? We rejoice in the Apostle's spirit, in his faithfulness, his courage. Since he understood it to be the Lord's will that he should go to Jerusalem, he knew that the Father would overrule all things, in harmony

with the counsel of his own will.

Apparently his visit to Jerusalem was opportune, we might say necessary, to the cementing of the "household of faith," and to the assisting of some of them to a clearer position in regard to the obligations of the Law and the liberty from the Law to those who accepted Christ. Besides, from this place the Lord had ordained that the Apostle should go to Rome to declare his name there also, in the political capital of the world; and that he should first declare the Gospel to Agrippa and Festus and other notables, and through them be called to the special attention of the Emperor and others in authority at Rome. It was quite proper that the Apostle's friends desisted from further entreaty. First, because they recognized that he was doing the will of the Lord; and because, in the second place, further effort would evidently fail to move him from his purpose – prove fruitless. Third, because they were making it still harder for him to bear, breaking his heart.

Let us all remember that all of the Lord's special dealings with his people during this Gospel Age are with a view to developing them in character, not only good character, but fixed character. It is not sufficient that we accept Christ, nor sufficient that we should preach him to others. To be fit for the heavenly Kingdom we must develop characters in harmony with our Lord – gentle, yet firm; sweet, yet strong. This is signified in the terms of our discipleship. We are to copy our Teacher, who is also our Redeemer. We are to let his light shine. It is important that we see this fact. The difficulty apparently with the majority of people is that they do not see and do not understand the purpose of life; hence valuable opportunities and precious lessons are wasted upon them.

Mr. Marden has recently said, "I know a man whose accomplishments have been the marvel of all who knew him, who in his boyhood made the resolution: 'Let every occasion be the great occasion, for you cannot tell when fate may be taking your measure for a larger place.' If he was in school, he kept thinking, 'I must not skip the hard problems, for they may rise up in my manhood and testify against my faithfulness as a boy, and may defeat me. I must see an opportunity in every lesson and cultivate a habit of overcoming, a habit of faithfulness and accuracy.'"

This is merely an elaboration of what the Good Book says, "Do with thy might what thy hand findeth to do, for there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in the grave whither thou goest." And again, "He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is greater."

Difficulties in the way would not prove that it is not the right way. Bunyan's Pilgrim, in traveling toward the heavenly city, found the Hill of Difficulty in his way. And our Lord forewarned all who would walk in his steps that their pathway must, of necessity, be full of tribulation – testings. The reward is to them that overcome. There could be no overcoming unless there were difficulties.

HOW TO DECIDE THE LORD'S WILL

The Apostle does not tell us the basis of his confidence in doing the will of the Lord in going to Jerusalem, but we may be sure that he had substantial reasons for believing that he was walking in the Lord's way. His entire character shows us that he would be too cautious, as well as too faithful, to go in any direction contrary to the Divine will.

As to how we may decide as to what is and what is not the Lord's way for us, we find that the rule which George Mueller tells us he followed is so nearly the one which we follow ourself that we take pleasure in quoting it: –

"I seek in the beginning to get my heart in such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. Having

done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to a great delusion. I seek the will or Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone, without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the holy Spirit guides us at all, he will do it according to the Scriptures, and never contrary to them. Next, I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will, in connection with his Word and his Spirit. I ask God in prayer to reveal his will to me aright. Thus by the prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to deliberate judgment according to the best of my knowledge and opportunity, and, if my mind is thus at peace, I proceed accordingly."

HIGHLY HONORED MNASON

In due time the Apostle and his companions started for Jerusalem. We read, "We took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem." This word carriages is not now generally in use. It is old English and signifies baggage or luggage; bag, baggage; lug, luggage; carry, carriage.

Mnason of Cyprus, for a long while a disciple, with whom the travelers lodged at Jerusalem, met the travelers at Caesarea and with some of the brethren at the latter place accompanied them to Jerusalem. They were a happy company of probably a dozen, yet a fearful company, in view of their expectation that something would surely befall their beloved Brother, the Apostle Paul – because, "If one member of the Body suffer, all the members suffer with it." Arrived at the home of Mnason still other brethren welcomed them, though the regular meeting and official greeting did not come until later through St. James, who seems to have been the chief or spokesman amongst the brethren.

Mnason evidently appreciated his guests and enjoyed the privilege of their entertainment. But how much his joy must have been subsequently enhanced we can only imagine. The future years of the Apostle's life, his prominence before the Church, the blessings that went from him to all in a public way, must have been with him, also, in the course of daily life and have blessed its amenities. While it was a great honor to entertain the Lord, as Lazarus and Mary and Martha did at Bethany; a great honor to entertain the Apostle as Mnason did, it is also a great honor today to entertain any of the Lord's disciples, whether weak and little or notable in the eyes of the world. Every Christian must have this desire, if he have the brotherly love. And each one who entertains a prophet may expect a prophet's reward – a reward in proportion to the honor of the prophet in the sight of our Great King, whose ambassadors we all are. While it would be far greater honor, in one sense, to entertain the Lord himself than to entertain any of his brethren, nevertheless personal attention to our Redeemer being impossible he has assured us that he will accept any and everything done to the least of his brethren, as done to himself.

CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR A PRISONER – R. 4484

ACTS 21:27-39

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." – 2 Timothy 2:3

ST. PAUL, accompanied by Luke and Trophimus of Ephesus, Aristarchus of Thessalonica, Sopater of Berea, Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timotheus of Lystra and Tychicus of Ephesus, arrived at Jerusalem Friday, May 27, A.D. 57. He was returning from his third missionary tour amongst the Gentiles. He had been absent seven years. As we have seen, the Lord had permitted forewarnings to reach him that he might expect trouble – bonds and imprisonment – in the Holy City. However, this noble ambassador for Christ, undeterred, had now arrived. He and his associates, it will be remembered, brought with them money collections from the Churches in Asia Minor for the Church at Jerusalem, which, apparently, was in a measure of financial distress.

Their reception on their first day was apparently of a private and personal character, but on the next day, which was probably the Day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16), the Apostles and leading brethren came together to receive St. Paul and his company in a more formal manner. St. James, brother (or cousin) to our Lord, was apparently the recognized leader in the Jerusalem Church. No mention is made of the other Apostles. Probably some of them were absent, engaged in the work at other points. St. Paul recounted his missionary tour amongst the Gentiles and the Lord's blessing upon his ministries of the Truth, notwithstanding the tribulations permitted. We may presume also that at the same time the collections were turned over.

THE FEAR OF MAN – A SNARE

The brief record indicates that the brethren at Jerusalem were considerably perturbed by St. Paul's presence with them. Not merely did they fear for his personal safety, but also lest his coming might stir up persecution against them all. His activity and persistency made him well known to the Jews in the influential part of the world in which he had been laboring. The Jewish custom that the zealously religious come frequently to Jerusalem to celebrate religious festivals kept the Jerusalem Jews in touch with the religious interests of the whole world. St. James and his associates realized that in all probability Jews from Ephesus, Athens, Thessalonica, Berea, etc., might be present celebrating the Pentecostal feast. They knew that St. Paul's activities had already been reported, and that some, even of the Christian believers, were troubled at his reported teaching – that the Law was dead and that no one needed to pay any further attention to it. They urged St. Paul to contradict these partial misconceptions by going into the Temple and associating with some brethren who had taken the Nazarite Vow. They did not suggest that St. Paul take this Vow, but that he be present with these brethren, as a recognition of the propriety of what they did, and that he bear their expenses, which included not only the shaving of their heads and burning of the hair, but also the cost of sacrificing for them four animals each.

St. James and the leaders of the Church evidently understood St. Paul's position properly enough. He taught the Gentiles that it was not necessary for them to become Jews nor to obey the Jewish ritual, but that, instead of looking for God's favor through the types and shadows, they should look to Christ and his antitypical fulfilments of the requirements of the Law. He taught that the Law could not save either Jew or Gentile, but that only faith in Christ could bring the soul into relationship to God. He taught that while certain blessings of God yet remained for the Jew (Rom. 11:37), God during this Gospel Age is selecting a Spiritual Seed of Abraham from both Jews and

Gentiles. He taught also that if any one, Jew or Gentile, attempted to keep the Law, with a view to thus meriting eternal life, such would surely lose it; because "by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." Nothing in all this, however, really interfered with St. Paul's doing just what St. James and the others urged him to do for the four men under the Nazarite Vow. The shaving of their heads and the offering of sacrifices in demand of the Law governing their Vow, in no sense of the word interfered with or attempted to add to the merit of Christ's sacrifice. Nevertheless in our judgment a more courageous course might have been pursued. Apparently the very method taken to ward off public opposition merely served to arouse it. Let us not forget, however, that the Lord could have ordered the matter otherwise; could have overruled the matter differently had he chosen. Let us remember that the Lord foreknew that tribulations would assail the Apostle Paul, and had foretold them. Those who are in close relationship to the Lord have his assurance that all their steps are ordered of him and that all things shall work together for good to those who love God and who have been called according to his purpose. What a comfort! What a consolation this is to all of the Lord's people! No wonder such may have quiet, rest, peace, even in times of storm and trouble!

CONCESSION TO PREJUDICE UNSUCCESSFUL

The scheme to have St. Paul appear as partially endorsing the Law seemed successful for several days, but when the seven days were nearly expired he was recognized by Jews who had come from Asia. They had seen the Apostle with the Greek, Trophimus, and jumped to the conclusion that the latter was one of the four men whose heads were shaved. This would have been a grievous offence from the Jewish standpoint. Only Jews were allowed within the sacred precincts of the Temple, outside of which was a Woman's Court and also a Court of the Gentiles. A stone fence separated these two apartments and constituted what the Apostle elsewhere alluded to as the "middle wall of partition." (Eph. 2:14.) This wall was four and one-half feet high, and on it was a tablet which has recently been found by the Palestine Exploration Society which reads, "No man of alien race is to enter within the balustrade and fence that goes around the Temple. If any one is taken in the act, let him know that he has himself to blame for the penalty of death that follows." St. Paul was charged with this offence and not the Greek who was supposed to have been misled by the Apostle. It was on this score that St. Paul's life was in danger from the mob which speedily gathered at the cry of the Asiatic Jew that the Temple was being profaned.

While the mob was beating the Apostle, seeking to kill him, a chief Captain or Colonel of the Roman soldiers in the Castle Antonio close by the Temple became aware of the tumult and hurried to the scene with a troop of soldiers. The beating ceased. The people, who had not learned to respect the majesty of the Roman Law, had become amenable to its military forces.

The Apostle was chained by each arm to a soldier. The commandant, endeavoring to ascertain the cause of the tumult and unable to understand the conflicting testimonies, remanded the prisoner to the castle. But the mob, disappointed that they had lost the opportunity of taking his life, made a mad rush to get him from the soldiers or to kill him while under their charge. What a spirit of murder can be aroused, and suddenly, too, in the hearts of not only Jews, but Gentiles! And how often we find in the pages of history that such violence and unreason have been manifested in the name of and in defense of various religions! How utterly foreign to all of this is what St. Paul designates "the spirit of a sound mind" – the spirit of reason, justice – not to mention the spirit of generosity, loving kindness and tender mercy! As the seeing of the foolishness and the brutishness of a drunken person should act as a great temperance lesson in every right-minded man

and woman, so such a scene as this, whether recognized by our natural eyes or mentally seen through the printed page, should be a lasting lesson against anything so brutish and unreasonable. Let every instance of religious bigotry and fanatical violence speak to our hearts a lesson in the opposite direction, and fix in us resolutions that, by the grace of God, we will never be thus foolish, thus wicked; but contrariwise will become the more gentle and kind and Christ-like, as the days go by.

The oncoming of the mob led the soldiers to press one against the other so as not to lose their prisoner, and thus the Apostle was lifted off his feet and carried by the soldiers up the stairway.

The courage of this ambassador of Christ and his readiness to take advantage of every opportunity to tell the message of his Master was here wonderfully exemplified. We might have supposed that from the beating received from the mob and the more or less rough treatment in getting to the castle door any ordinary man would have been cowed with fear and excitement. But it was here that St. Paul, cool and collected, requested of the commander the privilege of speaking to the people, intimating, no doubt, that they had misunderstood what he was doing and that in a few words he might be able to pacify them. The officer was astonished, for the Apostle spoke Greek fluently. He thought likely that he was "that Egyptian" mentioned by Josephus, who, a short time before this, had gathered a large body of discontented Jews, to whom he represented himself as Messiah, and who, as his followers, gave the Roman authorities considerable trouble. St. Paul answered that he was a Jew of an honorable city and requested again the privilege of speaking to the people, which was granted. Promptly the Apostle preached Christ. No doubt he considered his thrilling experiences well repaid by the privileges of that moment – the privilege of telling a considerable concourse of people about Jesus; that he was the Messiah promised in the Law and the prophecies; that his sacrificial death constituted the redemption sacrifice for father Adam's forfeited life, and, incidentally, the redemption price for all of his children, who died under his sentence. Surely also he noted that now Messiah is calling a spiritual class of "first fruits" to be his associates in the Millennial Kingdom and that shortly Israel and all the nations will experience the privileges and blessings of that Kingdom. Surely he pointed out, also, that ***now*** is the acceptable time; that now is the time to make our calling and election sure to the chiefest, the spiritual part of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Paul proceeded to tell them of his missionary tours and how many of the Gentiles were receiving the message gladly and giving their hearts to the Lord in full consecration. But so strong was the Jewish prejudice that the mere mention of the going of this great blessing upon equal terms to the Gentiles re-enkindled the flame of hatred and violence, and their shouts and jeers rent the air. The Roman Colonel, perplexed at the situation, concluded that where there was so much opposition there must be some grounds for it. "Where there is much smoke, there must be some fire." And so he commanded that the Apostle must be whipped until he confessed what he had done wrong that created such a tumult and promised reformation. At once the command began to be fulfilled. They began to bind St. Paul to a bent whipping post. But the latter brought the proceedings to a quick termination by inquiring, "Do you think it lawful to punish a Roman citizen before he has had a trial?" The Colonel ordered him released at once, for already he had exceeded the law in the matter. He took the Apostle's word for it that he was a Roman citizen; for to claim this and to have it found to be an untruthful claim would have meant sure death. The Apostle was held a prisoner for trial.

There are several further lessons for us here. While not condemning the Jews harshly for their selfish, bitter feeling of opposition to the Gentiles, let us notice how much injury

this bitterness and selfishness worked to the Jews themselves. Had it not been for this wrong spirit doubtless many others of that time might have been quite ready to hear the Gospel. The lesson to us, therefore, should be to put away meanness, selfishness, enmities, bitterness, out of our hearts, out of our minds, out of our conduct and words; and instead to put on the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ – a spirit of meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love.

Another lesson for us is that when undergoing trials and difficulties, however unjustly and however much we realize that they could not come to us without the Lord's permission, nevertheless we are at liberty to use any legitimate means for our own assistance and deliverance – even as St. Paul took advantage of his Roman citizenship. God had provided him in advance with that measure of protection and it would have been culpable negligence on his part not to have used it and to have expected the Lord to deliver him in some miraculous manner.

THE ARREST OF ST. PAUL – R. 5942
ACTS 21:27-40

"Thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."
– Acts 22:15

WHEN St. Paul and his companions arrived at Jerusalem, he was returning from his third missionary tour amongst the Gentiles. He had been absent for seven years. On his way to Jerusalem the Lord had permitted forewarnings to reach him, informing him that he might expect trouble – bonds and imprisonment – in the Holy City. Undeterred, however, this noble ambassador for Christ and his associates had arrived there. They had brought with them money collections from the Churches in Asia Minor and Greece for the Church at Jerusalem, which apparently was in a measure of financial distress.

Their reception on their arrival was of a private and personal character, and they had further manifestations of the same loving brotherhood especially noted in our Study for August 27. On the following day, which probably was Pentecost (Acts 20:16), the Church was called together to receive the Apostle and his companions in a more formal manner. St. James the Less was apparently the recognized leader in the Jerusalem Church. St. Paul recounted his experiences during his third missionary tour and the Lord's blessing upon his ministrations of the Truth, notwithstanding the tribulations permitted. We may presume also that at the same time he turned over the collections from the Gentile brethren.

A DISADVANTAGEOUS COMPROMISE

The brief record indicates that the brethren at Jerusalem were considerably perturbed by St. Paul's presence with them. Not merely did they fear for his personal safety, but they were also alarmed lest his coming might stir up persecution against them all; for the Apostle's activity and persistency made him well known to the Jews in the influential part of the world in which he had been laboring. The Jewish custom that the zealously religious come frequently to Jerusalem to keep the feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16) brought the Jews in the Holy City into touch with the religious interests of the whole world.

St. James and his associates realized that in all probability there might be present at the

Pentecostal feast Jews from Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, etc. They knew that St. Paul's activities had already been reported; and that some, even of the Hebrew Christians, were troubled at his reported teachings that the Law was dead and that no one was obligated to pay any further attention to it. The brethren urged St. Paul to contradict these partial misconceptions by going into the Temple and associating with some brethren who had taken the Nazarite Vow. (Numbers 6:1-21.) They did not suggest that he take this vow; but that he be present with these brethren, as a recognition of what they did; and that he bear their expenses, which included not only the shaving of their heads, and the burning of the hair, but also the cost of sacrificing for them four animals each.

Evidently St. James and the leaders of the Church understood St. Paul's position properly enough, although apparently their minds did not grasp so clearly as did his the complete breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" which previously had separated Jews from Gentiles, nor did they appreciate so fully as he the fact that the Law was merely a servant, designed to lead to the School of Christ, prepared for the sons of God.

St. Paul taught the Gentiles that it was not necessary for them to become Jews or to obey the Jewish ritual; but that instead of looking for Divine favor through the types and shadows, they should look to Christ and His antitypical fulfilments of the requirements of the Law. He taught that the Law could save neither Jew nor Gentile, but that only faith in Christ could bring the soul into relationship to God. He taught that while certain blessings of God yet remained for the Jews (Romans 11:25-29), yet during this Gospel Age God is selecting a Spiritual Seed of Abraham from both Jews and Gentiles. He taught that if any one – either Jew or Gentile – attempted to keep the Law with a view to thus merit eternal life, such would surely fail; for "by the deeds of the Law, shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." – Romans 3:20-31; Ephesians 3:1-7; Galatians 3:8,16,29.

ST. PAUL'S COURSE NOT WRONG

Nothing in all this, however, really interfered with St. Paul's doing just what the Elders at Jerusalem urged him to do for the four men under the Nazarite Vow. The shaving of their heads and the offering of the sacrifices demanded by the law which governed their vow interfered in no sense of the word with the merit of Christ's sacrifice nor attempted to add to it. Nevertheless in our judgment a more courageous course might have been pursued. Apparently the very method taken to ward off public opposition merely served to arouse it.

Let us not forget, however, that the Lord could have overruled the matter differently, had He chosen to do so. Let us remember that He foreknew that tribulations would assail the Apostle Paul, and had foretold them. Those who are in close relationship to the Lord have His assurance that all their steps are ordered of Him, and that all things shall work together for good to them that love God and that have been called according to His Purpose. (Psalm 37:23; Romans 8:28.) What a consolation these assurances are to all of the Lord's people! It is no wonder that such may have quiet, rest and peace, even in times of storm and trouble.

Some one may inquire, "Would it not be a sin for the Apostle or other Christians to participate in any measure in sacrifice in the Temple? Were not all the Jewish sacrifices done away in Christ?

We answer, Not at all. The sacrifices which pointed to Christ, and which He fulfilled, were no longer proper. But the sacrifices which the Nazarites offered in connection with their vows did not typify Christ's sacrifices, but rather the consecration and devotion of the people, the antitypes of which will prevail during the Millennium. It was therefore not a sin for the Apostle to join in this procedure; and yet we doubt the wisdom of his course. We incline to think that it was rather a

temporizing acknowledgment of the dignity of the Jewish Temple and its services; whereas by this time the real Temple and the real service had been inaugurated. The Church itself is the antitypical Temple, in which God has been present by His Holy Spirit ever since Pentecost.

HIS CONDUCT MISUNDERSTOOD

For several days the scheme to have St. Paul appear as partially endorsing the law seemed to be successful; but when the seven days were nearly expired, the Apostle was recognized by Jews who had come from Asia. They had seen him with Trophimus, a Greek from Ephesus, and jumped to the conclusion that the latter was one of the four men whose heads were shaved. From the Jewish standpoint this would have been a grievous offense; for only Jews were permitted to come within the sacred precincts of the Temple, outside of which were the Court of the Women and also the Court of the Gentiles. These two courts were separated by a stone fence, which constituted what the Apostle elsewhere alluded to as "the middle wall of partition." – Ephesians 2:14.

This wall was four and one-half feet high, with small obelisks at regular intervals, bearing inscriptions which read, "No man of alien race is to enter within the balustrade and fence that goes around the Temple. If any one is taken in the act, let him know that he has himself to blame for the penalty of death that follows." St. Paul was charged with this offense, and not the Greek who was supposed to have been misled by the Apostle. It was on this score that St. Paul's life was in danger from the mob which speedily gathered at the cry of the Asiatic Jews that the Temple was being profaned.

While the mob was beating the Apostle, seeking to kill him, Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, or colonel, of the Roman cohort which formed the garrison in the Castle Antonia, close by the Temple, became aware of the tumult and hurried to the scene with a company of soldiers. Immediately the beating ceased; for although the Jews had not learned to respect the majesty of the Roman law, they had become amenable to its military forces.

The Apostle was chained by each arm to a soldier. The colonel endeavored to ascertain the cause of the tumult, but was unable to understand the conflicting testimonies. Therefore he remanded the prisoner to the castle. But the mob, disappointed because they had lost the opportunity of taking St. Paul's life, made a mad rush to get him from the soldiers or to kill him outright. The oncoming of the mob led the soldiers to press against one another in order not to lose their prisoner. As a result the Apostle was lifted off his feet and carried by the soldiers up the stairway.

PERMISSION TO PREACH GRANTED HIM

The courage of this ambassador of Christ and his readiness to take advantage of every opportunity to tell the Message of his Master were here wonderfully exemplified. We might have supposed that the beating which he had received from the mob, together with the more or less rough treatment which he had undergone in getting to the castle door, would have cowed him with fear and excitement. But on the contrary he was cool and collected. Calmly he asked the commandant to grant him the privilege of speaking to the people. Doubtless he intimated that they had misunderstood what he was doing, and that a few words from him might pacify them.

The Roman officer was astonished; for the Apostle spoke Greek fluently. He had thought that St. Paul was "that Egyptian," mentioned by the historian Josephus, who had a short time before gathered a large body of discontented Jews, to whom he had represented himself as Messiah and who, as his followers, had given the Roman authorities considerable trouble. St. Paul answered that he was a Jew of an honorable city, and again asked the privilege of addressing the people, which was granted.

SUFFERING AS CHRISTIANS – R. 3188

ACTS 21:30-39

"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." – 1 Peter 4:16

WHEN the Apostle Paul and his companions arrived at Jerusalem they were cordially received by the brethren – they had further manifestations of the same loving brotherhood specially noted in our last lesson. The Church was called together that the Apostle might make a general and public report, and might turn over to the proper authorities the funds donated for their poor by the churches amongst the Gentiles. Apparently several of the Apostles still resided at Jerusalem, "James, our Lord's brother," being in some particular sense the leader or chief spokesman. Tradition tells us that the different apostles ultimately scattered in different directions, preaching the Gospel – Andrew to Cythia, Jude to Assyria, Thomas to Persia and India, Peter to Babylon and Rome. We infer, however, that they had remained at Jerusalem up to this time, since Paul seems to have been the leader in the work amongst the Gentiles; quite probably his report of the Lord's blessing upon his efforts, in conjunction with the subsequent persecutions at Jerusalem, led the other apostles to go into the foreign fields of service.

It was now but twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and less than half that time before the beginning of the factionalism and anarchy which led up to that destruction. The apostles quite probably in due time bethought themselves of the Lord's injunction that they must ultimately flee out of Jerusalem before it would be encompassed with armies and escape be impossible. We today are living within a corresponding twelve years of utter overthrow of churchianity, and must not be surprised if in the Lord's providence the bitterness and opposition against the present truth should become more and more open and violent, thus hindering our efforts amongst the professed people of God today, and compelling us to go more particularly to those who make less boast of their loyalty to God.

The apostles and brethren at Jerusalem were fully in sympathy with the Apostle Paul, though evidently their minds did not grasp so clearly as did his the complete breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" which previously had separated Jews from Gentiles, nor did they appreciate so fully as he that the Law was merely a pedagogue, a servant, to lead to Christ – to his school. Practically the Jerusalem friends said to the Apostle: We are in full accord with you and the noble work which you have been prosecuting, and we perceive the Lord's blessing upon it, and recognize the true Christian spirit in these brethren who have come with you, as representatives of the work of the Gospel amongst the Gentiles. However, you know how great is the opposition here; how bitter is the hatred of the Jews, and that they have heard of you. Jews who have come from Ephesus and Corinth and other places, evidently misunderstood some things that you taught there, or at least misrepresented your teachings. They have heard that you are an enemy of the Law, while we know that you believe that "the Law is just and holy and good," and full of shadows of better things to come. But now, as an offset to their pernicious presentations, and as an object lesson to some of our own brethren who are not just strong along this line, and for the benefit also of some whom we are endeavoring to interest in the Gospel of Christ, we have something to propose to you, and to these brethren: it is that you go into the Temple, as a worshiper, and associate yourselves with some of the rites and ceremonies there in progress, that thus all may know that you are not disrespectful toward Moses or the Law or the Temple, – that their misapprehension and evil-speaking may be counteracted. Amongst us are three brethren who have made certain vows to the Lord, called the vows of the Nazarites, and

we suggest that you show your sympathy with them and with the arrangements, acting as sponsor for them – paying for the sacrifices which, according to the Law, they must offer, etc. Thus you will be seen with them, and in performance of certain ceremonies, for about a week, in the court of the Temple known as the Court of the Women, and we hope that much good will result therefrom, and much misapprehension be abated.

We can easily imagine that the bold champion of the truth in foreign lands would never have chosen such a course of his own volition, and that when the suggestion came to him it was not enthusiastically received. Nevertheless, since it seemed to be the judgment of the apostles and brethren in general – seemed to be in their interest and according to their view of advantage to the general cause, the Apostle yielded his own preference. We cannot suppose that he yielded to that which was wrong, yet we can easily imagine some one inquiring, Would it not be sin for the Apostle or other Christians to participate in any measure in sacrifice in the Temple? – were not all these sacrifices done away in Christ, and henceforth abominations in the sight of God, – sacrilegious?

We answer, No, not at all. The sacrifices which pointed to Christ, and which he fulfilled, were no longer proper, but these sacrifices which the Nazarites offered in connection with their vows did not typify Christ's sacrifice, but rather the consecrations and devotions of the people, the antitypes of which will prevail during the Millennium. It was no sin, therefore, on the Apostle's part to join in this procedure, and yet we incline to doubt the wisdom of the course pursued. We incline to believe that it was rather a temporizing acknowledgment of the dignity of the Temple and its services; whereas by this time the real Temple and the real service had been inaugurated; – for the Church itself is the antitypical Temple in which God has been present by his holy spirit since Pentecost. Although it is not distinctly so stated, we incline to believe that the Apostle Paul and all of his associates in this matter took a different view of it subsequently, as being a compromise which, without being sinful, was not advantageous, and reflected no special credit upon any connected with it. Perhaps such a lesson was needed by the apostles and the Church at Jerusalem, that they might learn to be the more courageous in their presentations of the truth – that they might be less fearful of the Jews, more bold in their presentations of Christ and the New Covenant arrangements in his blood – the better sacrifices, better vows, etc.

It was while the Apostle and these brethren, who were really Jews by nature, but who saw beyond the types and symbols, and appreciated the antitypes, were engaged in the performance of the typical, or symbolical rites, that the Jews recognized Paul and one of his companions, and became furiously incensed, either believing or claiming to believe that the Apostle was attempting to do the very reverse of what he and the Jerusalem Church intended – that he was attempting to discredit the Law and dishonor the Temple by violating, and getting others to violate, its holy precincts. As the excited shouts arose in the air a mob was quickly gathered; and as in Ephesus "the mob ran together, the greater part not knowing wherefore," so here again the mob merely knew that some of its leaders were frantically indignant at the Apostle Paul, and believed that he should be killed. He was dragged out of the Temple, and immediately the great doors of the Beautiful Gate of the Temple were closed – that no rioting or bloodshed might occur within the sacred enclosure.

The Tower of Antonia was close by the Temple Court, and steps connected the two. In this castle a band of Roman soldiers was quartered – evidently several hundred, because each centurion was a commander, or captain, of a hundred men. The riotous commotion brought forth the garrison, which appeared at just the proper time to deliver Paul from his enemies, who were beating him.

The chief captain, Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26), caused the arrest of Paul and commanded that he be chained to two of the Roman soldiers – much after the manner in which now a culprit is sometimes handcuffed to an officer. Each Roman soldier carried, as a part of his outfit, an iron chain and a leather thong, for use in just such an emergency. While this handcuffing, which fulfilled the prophecy of Agabus, was in progress, Lysias made inquiry respecting the Apostle and the crime which had occasioned the commotion and indignation of these religious people. As a Gentile, he would naturally suppose that such a commotion amongst religious worshipers must have been incited by some atrociously evil conduct, some villainy or sacrilege, or that a disguised robber or assassin had been discovered. The multitude shouted out its various conjectures, and, it being impossible to judge the case at the time on such evidence, he commanded that Paul be brought into the prison.

Paul arrested by Lysias

Lysias, the foreign officer, had probably a very imperfect knowledge of the language spoken by the Jews, which was either Hebrew or Syriac, his own language being the Greek. Knowing this, the Apostle spoke to him in the Greek language, and with such fluency as to cause the commander great surprise. From the account, he evidently had confounded the Apostle with an Egyptian leader of an insurrection of some time previous. Paul's request was that he be permitted to speak to the people, who were in such commotion and crying out, "Away with him!" He evidently thought that he might correct some false impressions and pacify the multitude. At any rate he would lose no opportunity for declaring the gospel of Christ. The Lord influenced the heart of Lysias to grant the request. The people quieted as they perceived that the commander had permitted the prisoner to make them an address from the stairs leading to the castle. Here was a most excellent opportunity for presenting Christ before a large number of seemingly devout people – Temple worshipers. Undoubtedly there were some grains of "wheat" in that multitude, though evidently the great mass was "chaff." The Apostle's words would be a blessing to the wheat, and serve to test, prove, demonstrate, that the others were without the real kernel of truth in their hearts, although they had the outward appearances of being devout worshipers of the true God.

It is worthy of remark that the Apostle never allowed opportunities to pass by him without doing all in his power to use them in the Lord's praise and for the forwarding of the truth. The majority of us, probably, would have been so affected by the excitement of such an incident and by the bruises resulting from the beating, that we would perhaps have forgotten all about the greatest and most important work of all committed to our care, and might have been much less prompt than the Apostle to seek an opportunity to testify to the Lord's praise and for the opening of the eyes of any who might be his people amongst our assailants. Let us learn this lesson: let us be instant in season and out of season, so far as our own convenience

and feelings are concerned, if only we can find opportune seasons for reaching others. The Apostle here illustrated his advice to Timothy, "Be instant in season and out of season, – preach the Word." It was in season for the multitude, because they were gathered there, and their attention was riveted upon him. Had he consulted his own convenience he would have said that it was very much "out of season" for himself; – that he was in no condition to speak, his nerves were excited and his body was bruised. But thinking of the convenient opportunity he spared not himself. In this he had the spirit of the Master, that he himself admonished us to have, saying that as Christ died for us we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren – in season or out of season, so far as our own convenience is concerned.

In a few well-chosen words he told the people the story of his own experience: he had, like themselves, been an opposer of Jesus, a persecutor of all the followers of the Lord; how he had been miraculously interrupted in this work, and led to consider the claims of Jesus from the standpoint of the Word of God – the Law and the Prophets; how he had become fully convinced that Jesus is indeed "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," the deliverer who should come out of Zion, and through whom a blessing should come to all that would receive his message. He then proceeded to tell them what should have brought joy to their hearts; viz., that the Lord sent him to be a messenger to the Gentiles, to tell them of the good tidings, that they also might participate, as well as the Jews. But their hearts being evil and selfish, this mention of divine favor and mercy going to others incensed them; they heard the Apostle in peace and with profound attention up to this point, and then all their prejudices seemed to be aroused with the thought that this man claimed and taught that Gentiles could have favor with God equal to that bestowed upon the Jews. They cried out against him in much the same language that they had used against the Lord, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live;" and while they thus cried out and threw dust in the air, and gesticulated with their arms, and threw their garments about, they made a wild, weird picture. The Roman commander, not understanding the Hebrew language, had not been able to follow the Apostle's discourse, and considering it evident that after he had had so quiet and orderly a hearing for a time, and now there was such a wild burst of indignation at what he said, it implied something very deep and treacherous and evil in the man, else his words would not thus arouse the passions and malice of religious people. He, therefore, ordered the Apostle to be scourged to make him tell a true story of his differences with the Jews.

Matters are somewhat the same today, though on a different plane. A stranger or worldly person, hearing some sectarian Christian animadvert against some one who has been preaching the true gospel of the Lord Jesus, would be inclined to suppose that the message must contain something very vicious, very terrible indeed, else it would not so arouse those who have outwardly so much "form of godliness." And if, as in the case of the Roman officer, an audience be granted, and the truth be presented in their hearing, they cannot understand it; – that is to say, "the world by wisdom knows not God," knows little of his plan, understands little of the language of his Word – it is a different language from that to which they are accustomed. And when, after a presentation of the truth, they find bitter opposition and invective against it on the part of religious teachers – modern scribes and Pharisees and doctors of divinity – we must not be surprised if they are the more inclined to side with those who represent popular theology – so-called "orthodoxy," and assume that the true gospel, because believed and taught by so few and opposed by so many of influence, must necessarily be something very evil.

Nevertheless, it is for us to take the Apostle for our guide, and to be faithful in the use of every opportunity to let the light shine forth,

even though it arouse the bitter opposition and persecution and prejudice of darkness. The darkness hateth the light, because it is reproved thereby, is our Lord's explanation. Nothing seemed so much to incite the scribes and Pharisees of eighteen centuries ago as the reasonableness of the true gospel. The common people heard it gladly, unless intimidated by their religious rulers, and led to doubt those who had been teaching them to the contrary. Hence, the rulers were incensed against the gospellers: "They were grieved because they [the apostles] ***taught*** the ***people***." They held, on the contrary, that only the scribes and Pharisees, the doctors and leaders, should be taught, and that the people should simply follow them blindly, and without requiring a reason and a "Thus saith the Lord" for their faith.

Our Golden Text for this lesson is well chosen. Paul's experience illustrated it; he was suffering as a Christian – because he was loyal to the Lord and his Word. He was not suffering because of having followed the admonitions of the brethren in going into the Temple, for very evidently the hatred that was against them in the hearts of his enemies would sooner or later have manifested itself anyway, and they would have sought his life, as on previous occasions. We merely see in this incident that the attempt of the apostles to create a favorable impression toward the Apostle Paul and his work amongst the Gentiles failed, and probably brought the matter of his arrest, etc., more quickly to the front than would any other course have done.

The Apostle was not ashamed of his sufferings, because he realized that they were endured for Christ's sake. Any man or woman would feel and should feel deeply pained at a public arrest and imprisonment as a felon, as a violator of the law. But when these things are experienced, and we can realize that they are coming to us because of our faithfulness to the Lord, in following in his footsteps, we may rejoice in ignominy, rejoice in things which otherwise would be shameful and detestable. If, therefore, in the Lord's providence, arrest or imprisonment or scourging should come to any who read this article, and if they can directly or indirectly trace their tribulation to faithfulness to the Lord and his truth, let them not be ashamed; let them glorify God on this behalf, rejoicing that they are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and remembering that even thus also it was with our Lord Jesus. He was placed under arrest; he was bound; he was scourged; he was publicly insulted; he was even crucified as a blasphemer against God. – 1 Pet. 4:16.

Another lesson which we may learn here is, not to trust too implicitly in the voice of the multitude, and if we find the rabble shouting against any one, either orally or through the press, we should not unquestioningly accept their verdict. We should remember the experiences of Jesus, the experiences of Paul, and of the other Apostles, and how the multitude cried out, "Away with them!" The Christian whose mind is thus relieved of prejudice is the better prepared to judge wisely respecting whatever may properly come under his observation or criticism. And then, if he have similar experiences himself, he will be the better prepared for them.

Paul preaching at Jerusalem

"Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."

Acts 22:1-3

PAUL'S HEAVENLY VISION – R. 2823

ACTS 22:6-16

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." – Acts 26:19

WHILE waiting at Jerusalem for the Pentecostal blessing promised, the eleven apostles overlooked the fact that they were not to begin their work, nor to consider that they had the proper endowment of wisdom or authority from on high for any part of it, until they should receive the promised blessing. Their selection of Matthias to fill the place of Judas, as the twelfth apostle was, therefore, a blunder; for altho they cast lots, to give the Lord a choice, and the lot fell on one of the two they had decided upon, they were in this doing something beyond their authority. The Lord had his own choice for the one who would take the place of Judas, and this one already had been undergoing special training and discipline "from his mother's womb." – Gal. 1:15; Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1.

The name of the Lord's choice for the twelfth apostle was, in the Hebrew language, Saul, and in the Greek, Paul. Under divine supervision, and with a view to his future work, without, however, interfering with his will, the Lord had carefully guided, in respect to the birthplace, opportunities, education, etc., of this one whom he foresaw to be his chosen vessel to bear his message to the Gentiles. He was well-born, well educated, inheriting the valuable right of a Roman citizen; was of a very religious cast of mind, a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee.

Paul, like others of his countrymen, was zealous for the Law, and for the promises made to Israel. He was not a wicked man in any sense of the word, but, on the contrary, was moral, upright, religious, having a religious zeal which led him to persecute Christ and his followers as heretics against the Mosaic institutions. He himself tells us that he persecuted the Church "in all good conscience," and yet he freely admits that in his language respecting Christians he blasphemed the holy name, and was an injurer of the saints and a persecutor. In his religious zeal, he tells us, he was "exceeding mad against" the Christians, and "delivered into prisons both men and women." – Acts 22:4; 26:11; 1 Tim 1:13; Phil. 3:5,6.

It was because Paul of Tarsus was not a bad man, but a good man, laboring under blindness and misapprehension, "an Israelite indeed," fighting the truth ignorantly, that our Lord favored him in the miraculous manner related in this lesson. Indeed, we may suppose that the Lord in some manner favored all "Israelites indeed," as we note, for instance, that he favored Nathanael, who at first was skeptical respecting his Messiahship, but was granted convincing evidence because of his sincerity. Similarly we may suppose that some of those who were converted by the miraculous manifestations of the day of Pentecost and shortly afterward (numbering thousands), may have been amongst the very ones who, but a few days previously, had thought of and perhaps had spoken of Jesus as an impostor, and his disciples as shallow-minded dupes. The Lord had mercy upon Nathanael, and assisted him in one way, while he assisted others, at Pentecost, in another way, through manifestation of the spirit; and now in a still different manner he arrested the attention of Saul, convincing him speedily that he was doing the very opposite thing from what he intended to do.

The heart of Paul being in a right attitude, – of loyalty toward God, of zeal for God, he merely needed to be set right; and we see that immediately the same zeal and fervency of spirit which once persecuted the Church was enlisted on behalf of the Church; – that he gladly forsook all to follow Christ, as soon as he recognized his true character. These things being true, those who refer to

the Apostle Paul's "***conversion***," and who compare it to the conversion of an ordinary evil-doer, show that they are laboring under a serious misapprehension of the facts. Had Saul of Tarsus been a wicked man we could not suppose that the Lord would have been interested in him in any such manner, nor that any such miraculous means would have been used to bring his attention to his wrong course of action.

God's time for dealing with the unbelieving world is not in this age – that work is left for the Millennial age. He is dealing now only with those who are "Israelites indeed," honest at heart; and it is for this class, and this class only, that the Lord's providence and drawing and convincing power is exercised. In other words, God never proposes to change a man's ***will***, but where his will is right and his ideas, his conceptions of proprieties, are wrong, it is in accord with every principle of righteousness for the Lord to favor such, and to open the eyes of their understanding: and this same rule holds good now, as the Prophet has declared: "None of the wicked shall understand – but the wise shall understand" – the truly wise. If any of the wicked gain a partial knowledge of the truth we may be sure that they will lose it, for, as the Scriptures again declare, "Light is sown for the righteous: truth for the upright in heart." (Psa. 97:11.) God has abundant provisions for dealing with other classes in the future, "in due time" – such as will be best suited to their cases.

Our lesson shows us Saul on his way to Damascus, armed with authority for the apprehension of the Lord's followers, accompanied by others who seemingly were under his command as a police force. All who know anything respecting the exceeding clearness and brightness of the noonday sun in Palestine, glaringly brilliant, will note the force of the statement respecting the great light which suddenly shone upon Saul from heaven about noonday. It must have been an exceedingly bright light; but apparently it affected Saul alone, and not those that were with him, tho they saw it and noted its effect upon Paul, who was blinded by it, as he fell to the ground. If he were afoot this might mean that he immediately prostrated himself, as one would be said to fall down before a king; if he were on horseback it might mean that he dismounted and prostrated himself; – but we do not incline to the thought which seems to be the common one, that he fell from his horse as in a faint. Rather, instead of being stunned or in a faint condition, Saul seems to have been fully possessed of his senses, and to have realized that he was the subject of a miracle. The voice which he heard was one, not of approval, as he might have expected, since he was supposedly in the divine service, but one of reproof: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Paul's clearness of mind is manifest in his inquiry, "Who art thou, Lord?" He recognized at once that the one who had thus power to arrest him in his journey was a lordly one, a powerful one, yet he wished to make no mistake, he wished to know who it was who thus reproved him, that he might benefit the more. The answer must have been a surprise to him, almost a shock: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

Our Lord's answer shows us how intimately he stands related with all those who are truly his; those who touch his saints touch him, for are they not, as the Apostle declares, "members in particular of the body of Christ?" He is indeed, "the Head of the Church, which is his body," and the ascended Head feels for and cares for and is interested in even the weakest and humblest of those whom he recognizes as truly his. If we remember this it will be a great help to us in the midst of trials and persecutions – the thought that we are "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," that "as he was, so are we in this world," and that while we are in the flesh, Christ is in the flesh, and that this will continue until the last members, even the feet members of the body, shall have suffered and have entered into glory. Let us remember this also, and specially, if at any time we are tempted to deal harshly or speak rudely or think unkindly of any of the

"brethren." Let us consider that as we, with all our weaknesses and unwilling imperfections, are the Lord's members and subjects of his interest and care, so also are all of the brethren; and that inasmuch as we do, or do not do, to one of the least of his brethren, we do, or do not do, to him. If this thought of the intimate relationship between the head and the members could be always fresh before our minds, how favorable would be the influence; how often we would improve the opportunity, not only of suffering, as the body of Christ, but of suffering with the fellow members, and assisting in bearing their burdens. "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." – 1 John 3:16; Heb. 2:11; Col. 1:24.

We are told that Paul's companions also saw the light, but heard not the voice. Elsewhere it is stated that they heard the voice, but saw no man. The statements are not to be supposed to be contradictory, but can be understood to be harmonious by remembering that the expression "hearing the voice" is sometimes used in two different ways. We may say to a friend, "I did not hear what you said." And again, speaking of the same matter, we might say, "I heard a voice or sound, but did not distinguish the words." The two statements might seem to be contradictory, but are really quite in harmony; and so with these two records of the Apostle's words. The voice was heard by all, but the message by Saul only.

Paul was an intensely practical man, and as soon as he understood who it was that had thus arrested him in his course of error he immediately inquired, "Lord, what shall I do?" This meant a great deal; it meant: I am anxious now to undo what I have been heretofore mistakenly doing; I am anxious to be your servant; I appeal to you for orders; I am ready to obey. "He, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.) This, the language and the attitude of all sincere souls, meant full surrender. It meant, I am not more sincere now than I was a moment ago, but the eyes of my understanding have been opened, tho it has cost me the loss of my natural sight. Let me demonstrate, O Lord, that my crime against thee was not of heart, but merely of misapprehension of head; let me lay down my life in thy service.

And similar seems to be the attitude of the Lord's true people today: those who have been blinded for years with misconceptions of the divine character and plan, and who have blasphemed God's holy name ignorantly, in misrepresenting him and his plan; and who have persecuted Jesus by opposing his truth, and those supporting it – these, when now the eyes of their understanding are opened, feel as did Saul, that the remainder of life is only too little and too short to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light; – of him who had mercy upon us, and who graciously shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. (2 Cor. 4:4.) Those who do not feel their hearts burn, and who feel no desire to pledge themselves to the service of the Lord and his truth, have not the spirit of the Apostle, – have not the spirit which is best pleasing to the Lord and most esteemed amongst those who have the mind of the Lord. And if we have this spirit or disposition in any measure let us cultivate it, by thinking what great things the Lord has done for us, and by considering how little we are able to do in return to manifest the appreciation which we feel and ought to feel.

The Lord's answer, sending Paul to Damascus, and informing him that "there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do," shows us that Paul was in the divine mind and plan beforehand. The Lord knew that he was honest, and one who, when the truth would shine into his heart, would not be disobedient to the heavenly vision, but would be prompt to consecrate his life, his all, in the service of the Lord and of the brethren. Verily, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The same thought is brought to us in noting the Lord's answer to Ananias, when the latter

was fearful to go to Saul. The Lord said, "Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Such language could not be used by the Lord in connection with one whose heart was not already fully consecrated to the divine will and service, however ignorantly it had been misused. So today we may have more hope of some who are outspoken in their opposition and enmity to the truth and its servants than for some who are its very cold and indifferent friends. The former may be truly consecrated, but blind, and if so the Lord's due time will come for their mental eyes to be open, and then we may be sure that they will be amongst his most faithful followers.

The wonderful light which flashed upon his eyes destroyed his sight. "Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were open he saw no man, but they led him by the hand and led him into Damascus, and he was three days without sight, neither did he eat or drink." We may be sure, however, that during those three days he did a great amount of thinking, – endeavoring to grasp, so far as possible, the lessons of his wonderful experiences. He tells us that he realized his experience to be nothing else than his seeing of Jesus. We need not suppose that he saw our Lord's spiritual body in its wonderful glory, for we are to remember the Scriptural statement that our Lord now is the express image of the Father's person; and we remember, too, that it is declared that no man can see God and live; that he dwells in a light no man can approach unto. And since our Lord Jesus is his express image and likeness, the same thing must now be true of him. Saul was but a man, and could not, therefore, have seen that which no man could see, and live. What, then, did he see? We answer, that he saw a representation of Jesus' glory. Since he could not see the fulness of that glory and live, he was permitted only to see a part of it, and that part destroyed his eyesight. This demonstrates to us the truth of the statement that the divine glory, if fully revealed to man, would cause death. Nevertheless, such an appearance of the Lord's glory to Paul made him as really a witness of Jesus' resurrection as were the other eleven apostles, for neither did they see Jesus, in reality, in his glorious spirit person; they saw him as he appeared in bodies of flesh, assumed for the very purpose of appearing and instructing; Paul saw him partially; that is to say, he saw some of the light from his glorious presence, sufficient to give him absolute assurance that Jesus was no longer, as he had supposed, the dead Nazarene, but the resurrected, glorified, heavenly Lord, a quickening spirit.

Let us note how the Lord chose a devout man amongst the disciples, when he would send a message to Paul, the record being that Ananias was esteemed amongst the Jews as a good man; and so we should always expect that those whom the Lord would choose as his special messengers would be good men, devout men, pious men, – not frivolous, not worldly, not immoral. And should we ever find any, claiming to be the ministers of the truth, of immoral character, we would have good reason to doubt them; or to suppose that if the Lord even had used them once, he would no longer use such after they had departed from the ways of righteousness. Nevertheless, we are to remember that we must not judge any hastily upon the testimony of the worldly, and especially not according to the witness of enemies of the truth, however religious those enemies may claim to be, but should remember our Lord's word, "They shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

Altho the Lord, at the hands of Ananias, performed a miracle on the eyes of Saul, so that scales fell from them, and he was able to look upon Ananias, nevertheless, we have every reason to believe that his eyes were never restored to their former strength, and that it was for this reason that the Christian brethren would have gladly plucked out their own eyes for him (Gal. 4:15); for this reason, also, that, altho a learned man, he wrote

very few of his own epistles, and was largely dependent upon his companions, tho himself invariably the chief speaker and writer. This was the "thorn in the flesh," which the Lord was not pleased to remove entirely, and which the Apostle learned to rejoice in ultimately, when he came to know that through this God's mercy and grace would abound toward him the more. – Gal. 6:11; 2 Cor. 12:7-9.

And so with us: we might be inclined to think that if we had greater talents and abilities, or we were relieved of certain weaknesses of the flesh, it would be better for us and for the Lord's cause; yet we are to remember the Master's words again, that we are to "seek first the Kingdom of heaven," and that all things needful of an earthly kind will be added to us. Our desires and prayers are not to be for the earthly things after which the Gentiles seek, but are to be chiefly for the spiritual things. We are to remember that as respects our earthly interests they have all been committed to the Lord, and that he knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him, and that he has promised to do for us in every matter exceeding abundantly better things than we could ask or think, as viewed from the standpoint of our spiritual and eternal interests. We surely would not want temporal blessings which would in any degree hinder our attainment to the exceeding great and precious promises – the spiritual things which God hath in reservation for them that love him.

Let us note carefully the message God sent to Paul through Ananias. "The God of our fathers hath ***chosen thee***, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just one, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth." Ah! how few indeed realize the truth of the Master's statement, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me ***draw*** him." How few realize that God, during this present time, is not attempting to gather the world into his arms, but merely, as the Scriptures abundantly declare, is taking out from amongst the people a peculiar people, a little flock, to constitute the Bride, the Lamb's wife and joint-heir. If all who have heard the voice of Jesus speaking to them through his Word, and who, with the eye of faith, have seen him, and into whose hearts the light of the glory of God, above the brightness of all earthly light, has shined, could but realize how great a favor has come upon them, it would indeed be a great stimulus to their appreciation of the privileges thus put within their grasp. They would see that all this signifies that we are called to be coworkers together with God, to be fellow-sufferers with Jesus in this Gospel age of sacrifice for righteousness' sake, and to be fellow-heirs with him in the coming age, in which the reign of righteousness shall prevail to the blessing of all the families of the earth, and the subjugation of Satan and sin.

This was the thought conveyed to Paul: that the meaning of the experience which had come to him was, that he had been found of such condition of heart as to be worthy to be a witness for God and for Jesus respecting the things he had seen and heard. And so with each of us; we are not to attempt to tell to others things which we have not seen and have not heard ourselves; but first of all the eye of appreciation and faith must be opened, and the ear of understanding unstopped, and then out of that which we ourselves hear from the Lord, through his appointed agencies and ministers, we are in turn to repeat to others – dispensing the divine favor according to our capacity for appreciation and for utterance.

The Lord's declaration to Ananias respecting Paul was, "He is a chosen vessel unto me. . . I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:15,16.) Thus it is with all of the Lord's chosen ones, like the Captain of our salvation, Jesus, each and all must learn and prove their obedience and loyalty to the divine plan by suffering in this present time, that they may be thus fitted and prepared for the glory, honor and immortality of the Kingdom. And to be chosen to suffer much implies qualification for the higher glory hereafter. Thus it was with our Lord

and with the apostles: and thus it is written, for our encouragement, that the sufferings of this present time work out "for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." – 2 Cor. 4:17.

Let us also note and apply the words of Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." There is a directness in this address that is worthy of being copied by all who have an influence upon others, and who are seeking to bring them along in the right way. Urge them to promptness, to full and complete obedience, to a full confession of the Lord and the truth. If they are not inclined to promptly obey after their eyes of faith have seen the Lord, and after their ears have heard his voice, they will be much less likely to be ready to make a consecration after a while, when the world and the flesh and the devil will say to them, Do not be an extremist, now; be moderate; do not make a full consecration of yourself to the Lord. Your neighbors and friends will think you beside yourself, and it will interfere with your hopes and prospects, and turn your friends into enemies. It will cost you too much; go slowly. The right course for every one who would give instruction is that of Ananias, to favor prompt obedience. "The time past of our lives sufficeth us" to have misrepresented the Lord, his character and his plan ***to any extent***. The remainder of life is far too short to show forth the praise of him whom we now see to be the glorious one, the author and finisher of our faith.

The baptism of John, which was instituted for Jews, was a baptism unto repentance and remission of sins – not original sin, but sins against the Jewish covenant, and sins against Jesus, the Messiah who fulfilled that Covenant. This was John's baptism, the one that was appropriate to the Jews; for every Jew who was in harmony with his God and with his covenant had his original sin covered under the arrangement of the Mosaic Law, in the sacrifices which took place year by year continually, until the great sacrifice came, the antitypical one, which superseded all others. Every true Israelite, therefore, who was in Moses under the Jewish Law Covenant, by virtue of Christ's work in taking the place of Moses, and in substituting the New Covenant for the Law Covenant, was, so to speak, transferred from the Old to the New; from Moses into Christ; and the ***typical*** covering of original sin became ***actual*** in Christ. Therefore the Jews were everywhere called upon to repent and to be baptized for ***the remission of their sins against their covenant***; that thus they might be in full accord with the Lord. This baptism for the remission of sins, John's baptism, was for the Jews only, and not for the Gentiles, who were not under the Mosaic covenant nor in Moses (baptized into Moses – 1 Cor. 10:2), and hence in the transfer of the Mosaic institution into the Christian we were not transferred into Christ. Baptism to the Gentiles means an admission into Christ – into the body or Church of Christ, as the Apostle explains. – Rom. 6:3-5.

Noting that the Apostle Paul was so faithful a follower of the Lord Jesus, and that his enlightenment in many respects so clearly illustrates our own spiritual enlightenment in this harvest-time, let us lay well to heart the Golden Text, the Apostle's words, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Let us, dear brethren and sisters, who have seen in the light of this harvest-time the light of the Lord's presence (***parousia***), shining above the brightness of all earthly light, giving a light of the knowledge of the glory of God, showing us something of the divine character and plan – let us not be disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but faithful to our privileges and opportunities in letting the light that has shined into our hearts and minds so shine out to others in our words, and in the living epistles of our lives, that men may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

ST. PAUL A PRISONER IN THE CASTLE – R. 5942

ACTS 22:17-29

"He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God, in Him will I trust." – Psalm 91:2

OUR last Study left St. Paul standing before the mob and motioning for silence, in order that he might address them. Doubtless he considered his thrilling experiences well compensated for by the privilege of that moment – the privilege of telling a large concourse of his countrymen about Jesus. Promptly the Apostle preached Christ – that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in the Law and the Prophets, that His sacrificial death constituted the Redemption Sacrifice for Father Adam's forfeited life and, incidentally, for all of Adam's children, who died under his curse.

Surely also St. Paul declared that Messiah was calling a spiritual class to be His associates in His Millennial Kingdom, and that shortly Israel and all the nations would experience the privileges and blessings of that Kingdom! Surely he pointed out the fact that this Gospel Age is the acceptable time in which to make our calling and election sure to the chiefest part of the Abrahamic Covenant – the spiritual phase! Then he proceeded to tell his audience about his missionary tours. He declared that many of the Gentiles were gladly receiving this Message and giving their hearts to the Lord in consecration.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE REJECTED

But so strong was the Jewish prejudice that the mere mention of the fact that this great blessing was going upon equal terms to the Gentiles re-kindled the flame of hatred and violence; and their shouts and jeers rent the air. Perplexed at the situation, the Roman commandant concluded that where there was so much opposition there must be some cause for it. Thereupon he gave orders that the Apostle be whipped until he confessed what he had done to create such a tumult.

At once the command began to be carried out by the soldiers, who proceeded to tie St. Paul to the whipping-post. But the Apostle brought the proceedings to a quick termination by inquiring of a centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard the question, he reported the matter to the colonel, who came and questioned the Apostle. He took St. Paul's word for it that he was a Roman citizen; for to have made an untruthful claim to citizenship would have meant sure death as soon as the matter had been investigated. The Apostle was held a prisoner for trial.

"THE DARKNESS HATETH THE LIGHT"

Matters are somewhat the same today, although on a different plane. A worldly person, on hearing some sectarian Christian animadvert against some one who has been preaching the true Gospel of Christ would be inclined to suppose that the Message must contain something very vicious, very terrible indeed; else it would not so arouse those who have outwardly so much "form of godliness." And if, as in the case of the Roman officer, an audience be granted, and the Truth be presented in the hearing of the worldly person, he cannot understand it.

The reason for this is that "the world by wisdom knows not God," knows little of His Plan, understands little of His Word; for its language is different from that to which they are accustomed. When then, after a presentation of the Truth, the worldly find bitter opposition and invective against it on the part of religious teachers – modern Scribes, Pharisees and Doctors of Divinity – we must not be surprised if they are the more inclined to side with those who represent popular theology – so-called "orthodoxy"

– and assume that the true Gospel must be something very evil, because taught by so few and opposed by so many of influence.

Nevertheless, it is for God's children to take the Apostle for their guide, and to be faithful to use every opportunity to let the light shine forth, even though it arouse the bitter opposition, prejudice and persecution of darkness. Our Lord's explanation of the matter is that "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3:19-21.) Nothing seemed to incite the Scribes and Pharisees of eighteen centuries ago so much as did the reasonableness of the true Gospel. The common people heard it gladly, unless intimidated by their religious rulers, and were led to doubt those who had been teaching them to the contrary. Hence the religious rulers were incensed against the Gospellers. "They were grieved because they [the Apostles] TAUGHT THE PEOPLE." – Acts 4:2,3,15-21.

LESSONS FROM THE APOSTLE'S EXPERIENCES

St. Paul was suffering as a Christian – because of loyalty to the Lord and to His Word. He was not suffering because he had followed the admonitions of the brethren in going into the Temple; for very evidently the hatred against them in the hearts of their enemies would sooner or later have manifested itself, and they would have sought the Apostle's life, as on previous occasions. In this incident we merely see that the attempt of the Apostles to create a favorable impression toward the Apostle Paul and his work amongst the Gentiles probably brought the matter of his arrest more quickly to the front than any other course would have done.

The Apostle was not ashamed of his sufferings; for he realized that they were endured for Christ's sake. Any individual should feel deeply pained at a public arrest and imprisonment as a felon, as a violator of the law. But when these things are experienced because of faithfulness to the Lord, because of following in His footsteps, such may well rejoice in the ignominy, rejoice in the things which otherwise would be shameful and detestable.

If therefore, in the Lord's providence, arrest or imprisonment or scourging should come to any who read this article, and they can directly or indirectly trace their tribulation to faithfulness to the Lord and to His Truth, let them not be ashamed. Let them glorify God on this behalf, rejoicing that they are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and remembering that even thus also was it with our Lord Jesus Himself. He was placed under arrest; He was bound; He was scourged; He was publicly insulted; He was even crucified as a blasphemer against God. – 1 Peter 4:16.

Another lesson which we may learn from today's Study is that it is not wise to trust too implicitly the voice of the multitude. If we find the rabble shouting against any one, whether orally or through the press, we should not unquestioningly accept their verdict. We should remember the experiences of our Lord Jesus, the experiences of St. Paul and of the other Apostles, and recall that the multitude cried out, "Away with them!" The Christian whose mind is thus relieved of prejudice is the better prepared to judge wisely respecting whatever may properly come under his observation or criticism. Then, if he should have similar experiences himself, he will be the better prepared to endure them.

Still another lesson for us is that when undergoing trials and difficulties, however much we realize that they could not come to us without the Lord's permission, nevertheless we are at liberty to use any legitimate means for our own deliverance – even as St. Paul took advantage of his Roman citizenship. God had provided him in advance with that measure of protection; and it would have been culpable negligence on his part not to use it, and to expect the Lord to deliver him in some miraculous manner.

How often we find in the pages of history that violence and unreason have been manifested in the name of religion and for the defense of various sects! How utterly foreign to all such conduct is what St. Paul designates "the spirit of a sound mind" – the spirit of reason, justice – not to mention the spirit of generosity, loving-kindness and tender mercy! As the sight of the foolishness and the brutishness of a drunken person should act as a great temperance lesson in every right-minded man and woman, so such a scene as this depicted in today's Study, whether recognized by our natural eyes or mentally seen through the printed page, should be a lasting lesson against anything so brutish and unreasonable. Let every instance of religious bigotry and fanatical violence speak to our hearts a lesson in the opposite direction, and fix in us resolutions that by the grace of God we will never be thus foolish, thus wicked, but contrariwise will become the more gentle, the more kind, the more Christ-like, as the days go by.

22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"
23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,
24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.
25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"
26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."
27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."
28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."
29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him, and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Acts 22:22-30

Acts Chapter 23

Paul presented to the Council

1 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."
2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.
3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

Acts 23:1-3

THE WRATH OF MAN OVERRULED – R. 4485

ACTS 22:30; 23:25

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." – Psalm 91:2

THE day after the riot and St. Paul's rescue by the soldiers the Roman Commandant, Lysias, perplexed, called together the Jewish Sanhedrin, that they might pass upon Paul's case; for by this time he had recognized that the point of dispute was a religious one, and that his only duty was to preserve peace. Thus Paul was afforded another opportunity to witness the Gospel to the Jews – to their most learned body, to their most influential Court of Seventy. Perhaps the Apostle began to realize by this time that his trying experiences were furnishing him with superior opportunities as a herald of the Gospel. Looking back with the eye of faith we can realize that this is always so; that the Lord is, as from the first, supervising his own work. But only in proportion as we know what the Lord's work is, can we have and use the eye of faith. We must see that the Divine program is not to attempt the conversion of the world at the present time, but to leave that for the future, to be accomplished by Christ's Millennial Kingdom. We must see that his work during the present age is merely that of selecting or electing the Church, to be his Bride-Consort in his Kingdom – his associate in the great work which will then be accomplished for the world in general.

As St. Paul realized the opportunity granted him of addressing the leaders of his nation, he sought to make wise use of it. Hence the earnestness of his countenance. "Looking steadfastly" at his audience, he began by reminding them of his faithfulness as a Jew. He had been ever a model citizen, never lawless. He addressed the council as "Brethren," thus putting himself on an equality with them, both in respect to religious zeal and general learning. Indeed, it is quite generally supposed that at the time of the stoning of Stephen, Paul, then Saul of Tarsus, was a member of the Sanhedrin.

"THOU SHALT NOT SPEAK EVIL"

The address which St. Paul had planned to deliver was interrupted by the High Priest's saying, "Smite him on the mouth!" This was a special mark of indignity and a protest against the words uttered. Our Lord declares, "The darkness hateth the light." It is not unfair to assume that the High Priest felt his own course in life specially condemned by St. Paul's words. Josephus charges Ananias with having been a hypocritical grafter of the baser sort, but so crafty that the public in general esteemed him. Suddenly checked in his speech the Apostle shouted, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!" The prophecy came true. Within two years Ananias was deposed, within six years he met a horrible death, his own son being associated with his assassins, who drew him from his hiding place in a sewer and slew him.

The term "***whited wall***" was applied to ordinary graves which were covered with a stone slab bearing the inscription. These were whitewashed frequently, so as to be easily discernible, lest any traveler should tread upon them, and, according to Jewish ritual, be defiled. The pure, glistening white of the stone was beautiful, but beneath was corruption. The strength of the symbol as representing hypocrisy is manifest. Some who heard the Apostle replied, "Answerest thou God's High Priest so?" St. Paul rejoined, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the High Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." It will be remembered that the Apostle never fully recovered his eyesight after being struck blind on the way to Damascus. Imperfect vision as a "thorn in the flesh" the Lord refused to relieve him of, but

assured him that in compensation he should have the more of Divine grace, which answer to his prayer the Apostle gladly accepted. It is possible, therefore, that he did not discern the High Priest, or that he did not know that the indignity was suggested by him. It is claimed by some that Ananias had usurped his office and hence the Apostle's words may have meant that he did not recognize that the true High Priest was present. The latter view is implied by the fact that St. Paul did not apologize for his words, but merely showed that he fully recognized the Divine Law that rulers should not be slandered.

This is a good rule for every one today. The tendency to speak evil of dignitaries, to belittle them, to caricature them, is a prevalent sin, which is doing much more to undermine good government than the funmakers seem aware. Undoubtedly there are times and ways for protesting against things and methods with which we do not fully agree. But the people of God should pre-eminently stand for law and order, with as much justice as may be obtainable, waiting for absolute justice until the King of kings shall take his Millennial Throne. His command to us meantime is that we "be subject to the powers that be" and "follow peace with all men, so far as lies in us" – so far as is possible.

Incidentally we remark that some are even disposed to speak jestingly of the Lord and the Scriptures. This is a dangerous practice. "The ***reverence*** of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and it must continue in us and increase as the years go by, if we would make our calling and election sure to the glorious things which God has in reservation for them that love him and reverence him.

ST. PAUL AS A GENERAL

The smiting of the prisoner, and his retort, interrupted at its beginning the hoped-for presentation of the Gospel. The Apostle perceived that the prejudice against him was such that no speech of his could affect his hearers. They were dominated by the high priest, whose lack of justice had found so early a manifestation. Like a general, finding his front attack useless, he wheeled his forces and, by a flank movement, captured the sympathies of fully one-half of his auditors; and at the same time he secured an opportunity for showing that the doctrine he preached was the logical outcome of the faith of all of the large sect called Pharisees. He did this by shouting out, "I am a Pharisee; the son of a Pharisee; and I am being persecuted because of my belief in the doctrine of the resurrection." This was all strictly true. The word Pharisee signifies a person professing entire sanctification to God. And St. Paul had never ceased from this attitude. His experiences on the way to Damascus had changed his course of conduct, but had not changed his attitude of heart, which, from the first, was loyal to God "in all good conscience."

The Apostle well knew that the Sanhedrin was about equally divided between the ultra-orthodox, holiness-professing Pharisees and the agnostic and higher-critical Sadducees, who numbered amongst them many of the most prominent Jews, including priests. The effect of his shout was instantaneous. The Pharisees took his part as one who believed in some respects as they did, although they could not endorse all of his teachings. As between the infidel Sadducees and an out-of-the-way Pharisee they promptly espoused the cause of the latter. A tumult ensued, some seeking to take his life and others to protect it. Again Caesar's soldiers needed to intervene between warring factions of the people of God. How sad a scene! How pitiable that those who possess much advantage every way as Jews under Divine instruction should so sadly neglect the lessons of the Divine Law in respect to justice and each other's rights, not to mention the instruction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" How pitiable it is that the same is sometimes true amongst Christians possessed of still higher appreciation of the Divine standards and under covenant vows to lay down their lives for the brethren, and indeed

exhorted that they cannot win the prize they seek unless they reach the point of loving their enemies!

True, fisticuffs are not popular in our day amongst civilized people, but cannot even greater cruelty be accomplished by the tongue than by the hand? And is it not true that many, even amongst those who have named the name of Christ and taken upon them consecration vows to do his will, bite and devour one another under the influence of the Adversary's spirit – "anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife." As we see these things shall we not learn a valuable lesson, which will enable us the better to glorify our Father in heaven?

Back at the castle in safety the Apostle was doubtless wondering in what manner the Lord had been glorified by his latest experience. Often it is thus with ourselves. But where we cannot trace the Lord's providences and see the outcome we have all the better opportunity for experiencing the faith which can firmly trust him, come what may. The castle Commandant was evidently learning that his prisoner was no common character, one who was calm and alert, dignified and humble and self-possessed, while his opponents were the reverse of all these, thus evidencing to the unprejudiced mind that the Apostle was probably in the right of the controversy. This change in his attitude towards St. Paul was manifested by his kindly treatment of the latter's nephew, who had heard that forty professed religionists, forgetful of the Divine Law, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," had bound themselves to each other by an oath that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed St. Paul, a man who had done them no harm, but who, on the contrary, had merely endeavored as wisely as possible to do them good. At the instance of his mother, St. Paul's sister, the lad had gained access to the castle and explained the plot to his uncle, who sent him to Lysias, the Commandant. The latter took the boy by the hand to a private place, heard his story and dismissed him, telling him to keep the matter quiet. He perceived that he was in conflict with at least one-half of the influential of Jewry, and that his wisest course would be to put his prisoner under the protection of the governor, Felix, at Caesarea. Accordingly that very night at 9 o'clock two hundred infantry, two hundred spearmen and seventy cavalry took the Apostle to new quarters, where as an ambassador in bonds he would have fresh opportunity for representing his great Master.

Lessons for us are God's providential care, and how this operates towards his faithful ones, such as the Apostle and all who have "made a covenant with him by sacrifice." The incident shows how God prefers to use natural means rather than supernatural agencies, and how all should be on the alert to serve the Lord's cause at any moment and every moment. God's purposes will be accomplished, but happy is the man or woman or boy or girl accounted worthy of the privilege of any service to the Lord or to the least of his disciples. Let us, then, be continually on the lookout, in an inquiring attitude of mind, desirous of knowing the mind of the Lord in every matter. As for the Apostle, he doubtless learned a lesson which we all may profitably consider; namely, that while having full confidence in the Divine will, it is ours to reasonably and properly protect our own lives and interests, as well as those of others.

The Golden Text is very impressive in connection with this lesson. Whether they and others recognize the fact or not, those who have the Lord for their refuge and fortress have a superhuman care and protection.

"THE LORD STOOD BY HIM" – R. 3190

ACTS 23:11-22

"The Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer."

AFTER the exciting experiences of our last lesson the Apostle must have felt somewhat depressed in spirit and discouraged. True, he had passed through equally great trials amongst the Gentiles, but here, amongst his own people, and in the City of the Great King, the opposition to the gospel would be much more inclined to make him heart-sore. Besides, he evidently had come to Jerusalem full of the thought that under the Lord's providence he might accomplish a considerable work amongst his kinsmen according to the flesh, and rescue some of them before the great overthrow which he realized was impending. It was in this time of great mental stress that the Lord so graciously communicated with him by a dream, as declared in the first verse of our lesson. What an encouragement it must have been! and the fact that it was given is an assurance that it was needed; for the Lord very rarely indeed interposes miraculously in the course of events unless there is special necessity. On two other occasions, when the Apostle was in straits, the Lord manifested his favor and encouraged him in like manner. – Acts 18:9,10; 27:24.

How much the Apostle must have felt strengthened by this vision, and assurance of divine care, we can well imagine. Nevertheless, the Lord was as truly with him and as fully caring for his interests as on other occasions, when no vision attested the fact: and he is with us, his followers of today, in like manner; and doubtless the visions granted to the Apostle were destined of the Lord to be an encouragement for "all who should believe on him through their word." The Apostle's visions serve us as they served him – assuring us also that the Lord is with his people, and is able to care for and protect and guide and bless our efforts today, as eighteen centuries ago. But to have the Lord thus with him and to feel good cheer in the Lord's presence implied the fullest sincerity and zeal on the part of the Apostle to do and to be all that would please the Master; and similarly we can enjoy his presence and appropriate to ourselves the message, "Be of good cheer," only in proportion as our hearts can realize that, however imperfect our labors for the truth and for the brethren, they are done "as unto the Lord" and to the best of our ability.

The day before this vision, by order of the Roman commander, the Apostle was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin, of which the high priest, Ananias, was president. The Apostle was permitted to address the Sanhedrin, and began by declaring himself a Jew, who had always lived in full harmony with the laws of his country – an honorable citizen. It was at this time, it will be remembered, the high priest, possibly thinking this language a reflection against himself (for he had an unsavory reputation), ordered an attendant to smite the Apostle on the mouth – an insult not at all uncommon in the East at that time, and, to some extent, even to this day. The Apostle, justly indignant, exclaimed, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" One who stood near him replied, "Answerest thou God's high priest so?" and the Apostle replied, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." It is uncertain what the Apostle meant by this language. It may be his defective eyesight did not recognize Ananias. Or, possibly, he meant to be understood as questioning the right of Ananias to the title of high priest. Or, in view of the fact that the antitypical high priest is the Lord Jesus, and that the typical priesthood came to an end at the time of Christ's glorification, the Apostle may have had that in mind. However, he acknowledged the teaching of the law

in respect to the officers of the government, to render honor to whom honor is due; and there is a lesson here for all of us in this day, when we find so many disposed to "speak evil of dignitaries," and bring railing accusations against them. The attitude of the Lord's people should be a very conservative one in such matters – in harmony with Michael's words to the Adversary, "The Lord rebuke thee!"

Reasoning that he would have scant courtesy from such a tribunal, and knowing that its members were about equally divided as between Pharisees and Sadducees, and that the high priest was a Sadducee, the Apostle appealed to the Pharisees that it was a case in which the Sadducees were trying to do him injury because of his religious faith, much of which was shared in by the Pharisees; and that a Sadducee, in violation of the Law, had just caused a Pharisee to be smitten in the mouth. He thus to some extent gained the sympathy of the Pharisees by declaring that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and that the real animus of the opposition against him was on the score of the resurrection of the dead – for the Pharisees believed in a resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees denied it. Immediately there was a contention in the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees to some extent espousing the Apostle's cause, as against their adversaries, the Sadducees. The meeting broke up in disorder, the Roman commander, Lysias, rescuing Paul and removing him, and thus causing the excitement to abate.

The honesty and propriety of Paul's claim to be a Pharisee has been questioned by some, but we regard their contention as without foundation. The Apostle was a Jew; so were the Pharisees, and a Jew may have either more or less piety without its affecting his nationality. The Pharisees claimed to be strict believers of the Law of Moses – believers in all that Moses and the Prophets did write, the name Pharisee signifying holiness or completeness in the observance of the Law. Paul had all his life been zealous for the Law of God and for its complete observance, and he was no less so as a Christian. Indeed, he was more so, for, having realized his own inability and the inability of all men to keep the Law, he had laid hold upon Christ, the sent of God, as the one through whom alone he would be able to keep the Law perfectly, wholly: as he expressed it, "The righteousness [the full, whole, complete meaning] of the Law is fulfilled in us [holiness people, complete in Christ] who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." All true Christians today could make a similar claim to that of the Apostle – that we are Pharisees – holiness people – keepers of the divine law – observers of it in every particular to the extent of ability, and with all shortcomings and deficiencies made up for us by our Lord Jesus. We are not under the Law Covenant, for it has given place to a better one, the original one; but as for the Law itself, it is God's Law, "holy, just, good," and can never pass away. It is recognized by us as much as it was recognized by the holiness people of old, and more so; for we discern, not only its letter, but its spirit – love for God and love for fellow-men.

The Jews must have realized that their case against the Apostle would appear very poorly in the eyes of the Roman commander, seeing that they were doing the rioting on both occasions, that the Apostle was the more sedate and willing to reason his cause, and that some of those supposed to be his accusers had turned to his defense. Meantime the sympathy of the Pharisees for Paul doubtless cooled off. At all events, during that night more than forty of the deluded religious enthusiasts bound themselves to God with a curse that they would kill Paul. Such an anathema was in effect, "May the divine curse be upon us if we do not effect the death of this man, whom we believe to be an enemy of God and of our religion, and whom we believe it to be our duty to destroy."

They laid a plot, as follows: They would have the high priest send word to the Roman commander that the Sanhedrin desired a fresh examination of the prisoner on some

other charges, the intention being that while the soldiers would be bringing him these forty men would assault and risk their lives to assassinate Paul. The matter was evidently not kept as secretly as they supposed, for one of Paul's relatives learned the particulars. Indeed, we know that it is impossible to keep anything from God, and that the most secret engagements are, therefore, powerless to do injury to the Lord's people. Nevertheless, when the information reached the Apostle he did not say to himself, God knows all about this matter and will take care of me, and, therefore, I have nothing to do in respect to it. On the contrary, he arranged matters so far as he could to defeat the plot – just as though the entire responsibility for his preservation rested upon himself. There is a lesson in this which many of God's dear people need to learn, viz., that each of the Lord's followers is a colaborer with the Lord in every good work. It is our duty to do all that we know how to do in proper self-defense and in protection of one another from the wiles of the Adversary and in the defense of the cause we serve; but, having done all in our power, having exercised all the wisdom and prudence we can command, we are to rest our hearts in the knowledge that the Lord will take care of all that is beyond our power to control, so that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.

There is another lesson for us in the fact that, although the Lord promised Paul that, as he had been faithful in testifying of him at Jerusalem, he must also preach the Gospel at Rome, nevertheless this latter prediction was long deferred of realization. It was over two years before he reached Rome, and then as a prisoner. We also need certain lessons of faith. We not only need to believe that the Lord is with us, and has the care of our affairs, but have need of patience and perseverance in faith and hope and love; and ofttimes with us, as with the Apostle, the Lord defers for a long time to complete our deliverance from adverse conditions – defers for a long time the opening of the desired door of opportunity in his service. We are to remember his wisdom as well as his love and power, and to rest contentedly therein after doing all within our power. In Paul's case it may be that conditions at Rome would be more favorable to his ministry later than they were at this time. It may be also that the Lord had a work for him to do in the interim as a prisoner at Caesarea, – amongst the Romans. And so in our affairs: we are to look for the opportunities of service as they come, and leave to our Lord the supervision of our life as a whole.

As a result of the communication of the plot to the Roman captain, he sent the Apostle under a strong military escort to the Roman capital of Judea, – Caesarea. There the Apostle, although kept a prisoner, was doubtless made comfortable, awaiting the trial before the Roman governor, Felix. The essence of this lesson as a whole, in its application to us, is expressed in the Apostle's words, "If God be for us who can be against us?"

**But the following night the Lord stood by him and said,
"Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must
also bear witness at Rome." And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together
and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till
they had killed Paul. Now there were more than forty who
had formed this conspiracy.**

Acts 23:11-13

A PLOT THAT FAILED – R. 5952

ACTS 23:14-24

"They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee." – Jeremiah 1:19

IN THE morning after the riot and St. Paul's rescue by the Roman soldiers, Colonel Lysias in perplexity called together the Jewish Sanhedrin, in order that they might pass upon the Apostle's case; for by this time he had recognized that the point of dispute was a religious one, and that his duty was merely to preserve the peace. Thus St. Paul was afforded another opportunity to witness the Gospel to the Jews – to their most learned body of men, their most influential Court of Seventy. Perhaps by this time the Apostle began to realize that his trying experiences were furnishing him with superior opportunities as a herald of the Gospel.

Looking back with the eye of faith, we can perceive that this is always so; that, as from the very first, the Lord is supervising His own work. But only in proportion as we know what constitutes the Lord's work can we have and use the eye of faith. We must see that the Divine Program is not to attempt the conversion of the world at the present time, but to leave that work for the future, to be accomplished by Christ's Millennial Kingdom. We must see that during the present Age His work is merely that of selecting, or electing, the Church, to be His Bride-Consort in His Kingdom – His Associate in the great work which will then be accomplished for the whole world.

As St. Paul realized the opportunity granted him of addressing the leaders of his nation, he sought to make wise use of it. Hence the earnestness of his countenance. "Looking steadfastly" at his audience, he began by reminding them of his faithfulness as a Jew. He had ever been a model citizen, never lawless. He addressed the Council as "Brethren," thus putting himself on an equality with them, in respect to both religious zeal and general learning. Indeed, it is quite generally supposed that at the time of the stoning of St. Stephen Saul of Tarsus – afterwards St. Paul – was a member of the Sanhedrin.

"SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN"

The address which St. Paul had planned to deliver was interrupted by the high priest, who commanded those who stood by the Apostle to smite him on the mouth. This was a special mark of indignity and a protest against the words uttered. It is not unfair to assume that the high priest felt his own course in life especially condemned by St. Paul's words; for, as the Master declared, "the darkness hateth the light." Josephus charges Ananias with having been a hypocritical grafter of the baser sort, but so crafty that the public in general esteemed him. Suddenly checked in his speech, the Apostle shouted, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall." The prophecy came true. Within two years Ananias was deposed. Within six years he met a horrible death, his own son being associated with his assassins, who drew Ananias from his hiding place in a sewer and slew him.

The term "whited wall" was applied to ordinary graves, which were covered with a stone slab bearing the inscription. These were frequently whitewashed, so as to be easily discernible, lest any traveler should tread upon them and, according to Jewish ritual, be defiled. (Numbers 19:11-16.) The pure, glistening white stone was beautiful; but beneath it was corruption. The strength of the symbol as representing hypocrisy is manifest.

Some of the bystanders who heard the Apostle asked, "Revilest thou God's high priest?" St. Paul rejoined, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

(Exodus 22:28.) It will be remembered that the Apostle never fully recovered his eyesight after having been struck blind on the way to Damascus. (Acts 9:8, 9.) Of his imperfect vision, his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), the Lord refused to relieve him, but assured him that in compensation he should have the more of Divine grace. This answer to his prayer the Apostle gladly accepted. It is possible, therefore, that he did not discern the high priest, or else did not know that the indignity was suggested by Ananias.

A COMMON, BUT DANGEROUS PRACTICE

It is claimed by some that Ananias had usurped his office, and that hence the Apostle's words may have meant that he did not recognize that the true high priest was present. The latter view is implied by the fact that St. Paul did not apologize for his words, but merely showed that he fully recognized the Divine Law that rulers should not be slandered.

This is a good rule for every one today. The tendency to speak evil of dignitaries, to belittle them, to caricature them, is a prevalent sin, which is doing much more to undermine good government than the fun-makers seem to realize. Undoubtedly there are times and ways for protesting against things and methods with which we do not fully agree. But the people of God should preeminently stand for law and order, with as much justice as may be attainable, waiting for absolute justice until the King of kings shall take His Millennial Throne. His command to us meantime is that we "be subject to the powers that be," and "follow peace with all men," so far as possible. – Romans 13:1; Hebrews 12:14.

Incidentally we remark that some are disposed even to speak jestingly of the Lord and the Scriptures. This is a dangerous practice. "The REVERENCE of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; and it must continue in us, and increase as the years go by, if we would make our calling and election sure to the glorious things which God has in reservation for them that love Him and reverence Him. – Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10.

ST. PAUL'S READY TACT

This incident had interrupted in its beginning the hoped-for presentation of the Gospel. St. Paul perceived that the prejudice against him was such that no speech of his could affect his hearers; for they were dominated by the high priest, whose lack of justice had found so early a manifestation. Like a general who, finding his front attack useless, wheels his forces and, by a flank movement, captures the enemy, so St. Paul captured the sympathies of fully one-half of his auditors. At the same time he secured an opportunity for showing that the doctrine which he preached was the logical outcome of the faith of the large sect of Pharisees.

The Apostle did this by shouting, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; and I am being persecuted because of my belief in the doctrine of the resurrection." This statement was strictly true. The word Pharisee signifies a person who professes entire sanctification to God. St. Paul had never ceased to maintain this attitude. His experiences on the way to Damascus had changed his course of conduct, but not his attitude of heart, which from the first was loyal to God – "in all good conscience."

St. Paul well knew that the Sanhedrin was about equally divided between the ultra-orthodox, holiness-professing Pharisees and the agnostic, higher-critical Sadducees, who numbered amongst them many of the most prominent Jews, including priests. The effect of his shout was instantaneous. The Pharisees took his part as one who in some respects believed as they did, although they could not endorse all of his teachings. As between the infidel Sadducees and an out-of-the-way Pharisee, they promptly espoused the cause of the latter.

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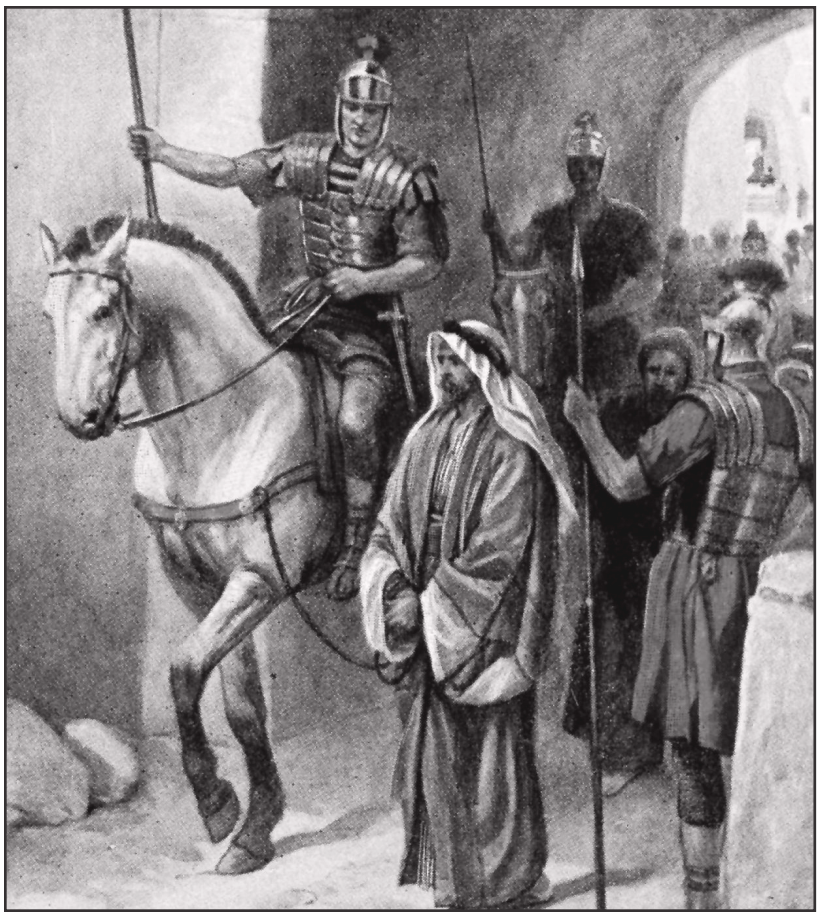

Lysias and Paul

And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night, and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

Acts 23:23-24

protect him. Again Caesar's soldiers needed to intervene between warring factions of the people of God. How sad a scene! How pitiable that those who possessed much advantage every way, as did the Jews under Divine instruction, should so sadly neglect the lessons of the Divine Law in respect to justice and to one another's rights, not to mention the Divine instruction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"! (Leviticus 19:18.) How pitiable it is that this is sometimes true of Christians possessed of still higher appreciation of the Divine standards and under covenant vows to lay down their lives for the brethren, and indeed exhorted that they cannot win the prize which they seek unless they reach the point of loving their enemies!

True, fisticuffs are not so popular today amongst civilized people. But cannot even greater cruelty be accomplished by the tongue than by the hand? Is it not true that even amongst those who have named the name of Christ and who have taken upon themselves a consecration vow to do His will, many bite and devour one another, under the influence of the spirit of the Adversary – anger, malice, hatred, envy, strife? As we see these things, shall we not learn a valuable lesson, one which will enable us the better to glorify our Father in Heaven?

A CONSPIRACY EXPOSED AND FOILED

Back in safety to the castle, the Apostle doubtless wondered in what manner the Lord had been glorified by this, his latest experience. Often it is thus with ourselves. But where we cannot trace the Lord's providence and see the outcome, we have all the better opportunity for cultivating the faith which "can firmly trust Him, come what may."

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dignified, humble and self-possessed, while his opponents were the reverse of all these, evidenced to an unprejudiced mind that he was probably in the right of the controversy. This change of the Roman officer's attitude toward St. Paul was manifested in his kindly treatment of the Apostle's nephew, who had brought word to his uncle that a band of forty men were plotting to take his life.

These conspirators, forty professed religionists, forgetful of the Divine Law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," had bound themselves to each other by an oath that they would neither eat nor sleep until they had killed St. Paul – a man who had done them no harm, but who had, on the contrary, merely endeavored as wisely as possible to do them good. At the instance of his mother, who was the Apostle's sister, the lad had gained access to the castle and had explained the plot to his uncle, who sent him to the commandant. The latter took the boy by the hand to a private place, heard his story and dismissed him, telling him to keep the matter quiet.

Perceiving that he was in conflict with at least one-half of the influential of Jewry, the commandant concluded that the wisest course for him to pursue would be to put his prisoner under the protection of Felix, the Roman Governor, at Caesarea. Accordingly, at 9 o'clock that very night, two hundred infantry, two hundred spearmen and seventy horsemen took the Apostle to new quarters, where as an ambassador in bonds he would have fresh opportunity for representing his great Master.

This Study shows us that God prefers to use natural means rather than supernatural agencies; and that all of His children should be on the alert to serve His Cause at any and every moment. God's purposes will be accomplished. But happy is he who is accounted worthy of the privilege of any service to the Lord or to the least of His brethren. Let us, then, be continually on the lookout, in an inquiring attitude of mind, desirous of knowing the mind of the Lord in every matter. As for the Apostle, doubtless he learned a lesson which we might all profitably consider; namely, that while having full confidence in the Divine will, it is ours to protect reasonably and properly our lives and interests as well as those of others.

25 He wrote a letter in the following manner:

26 Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.
27 This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.
28 And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.
29 I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.
30 And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him.

Farewell.

Acts 23:25-30

Paul before Felix

And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Acts 24:24

ST. PAUL BEFORE FELIX – R. 5953

ACTS 24:1-21

"Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man always." – Acts 24:16

FELIX, the Roman Governor of Judea, received St. Paul as a prisoner. The Apostle's enemies, the high priest and other Jewish rulers, hastened down from Jerusalem to Caesarea, thirsting for his blood. They brought with them a Roman lawyer, named Tertullus, whose knowledge of Roman usage would, they hoped, enable them to prove that St. Paul was a dangerous character – a sort of anarchist. Felix was the judge. There were no jurors. Tertullus, skilled as a pleader, made his charges and confirmed them by witnesses from Jerusalem.

Shrewdly the Roman attorney complimented the Governor along the lines of his hitherto efficiency in preserving the peace, in putting down every form of insurrection and in maintaining quiet and order. This very completely paved the way for the lawyer's request that the Governor should continue this praiseworthy course and rid the land of an obnoxious trouble-maker – the Apostle. Witnesses were produced who testified respecting the first tumult in the Temple at Jerusalem and also respecting that of the following day, in which the Sanhedrin became divided into two parts and a general uproar ensued. The Apostle was charged with being a ringleader of a sect called Nazarenes; and the claim was made that he had caused trouble amongst both Jews and Greeks the world over.

This was Tertullus' case. He charged that the prisoner was guilty of sacrilege – that St. Paul had defiled the Temple; and the inference was deducible that the Apostle had caused rioting within the holy sanctuary. Witnesses were procured to prove that these charges were true.

Governor Felix motioned to the Apostle that he was at liberty to answer the charges. Then St. Paul opened his defense with the remark that he was gratified that his judge had been on the bench for some time and was well acquainted with Jewish customs; that he would therefore understand what a novice could not – why the Apostle had come to Jerusalem to worship after the manner of the Jews, to celebrate one of their religious festivals. He had come, not to raise an insurrection, but to worship God after the Jewish custom; and no witness had testified that he was found in the Temple either disputing or gathering a crowd. The charge was untrue. He did not do these things in the synagogues or anywhere else; and his enemies could not prove the things whereof they accused him.

The Apostle's answer was both logical and complete. Still the Governor could not understand why, under the circumstances, there should be a commotion. Hence it was necessary for St. Paul to explain that the Jews had an antipathy against him because of his different religious belief, not because of any wrong-doing on his part.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION

St. Paul avowed that he had experienced no change in his Jewish belief – that he still believed the teachings of the Law and the writings of the Prophets; that he still held to the fundamental Jewish doctrine of the necessity of a resurrection of the dead; and that he still had faith in the Promise that through the resurrection of the dead God's blessing should ultimately come to Israel, and through Israel to all the families of the earth. Furthermore, he exercised himself, trained himself, disciplined himself, to keep his conscience pure, free from violation of Divine and human laws.

This was a grand testimony. Its force should have had weight, not only with the Governor,

but also with the Jews, who murderously sought the Apostle's life because of a little difference of opinion on religious questions. What a lesson we have here! A Roman Governor and judge of not too savory a reputation; a prosecuting attorney willing to sell his talents for money, regardless of the principles of justice; the Jewish high priest, typical of the great Messiah, associating himself with those who were endeavoring to pervert justice and to destroy one of "the salt of the earth"!

Our Lord had foretold that some of His disciples would stand before kings and princes, but that they should not be dismayed. He would stand by them to give them assistance. (Matthew 10:17-22.) How literally this was fulfilled in St. Paul's case! How evidently the Lord stood by him and gave him the suitable words!

The Apostle proceeded to explain that he had brought alms to his nation, the offerings of Gentiles who had heard his Message of the grace of God. Certain Jews from Asia Minor had found him purified in the Temple, but without cry or tumult. These Jews should have been brought forward as witnesses. Or those who were making the charges against him should have been specific; they should have said on the day following the attack by the mob – the day when he was brought before the Sanhedrin – what he did tumultuously in the Temple or what wrong-doing they had found in him. Only one charge could they make; namely, that while standing amongst them he had cried out, "Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called into question this day!" Surely the Governor could not think that in this there was anything akin to rioting or anarchy! The prisoner had been in the right; but those who were accusing him had been in the wrong.

A DOCTRINE LOST SIGHT OF

The Apostle's testimony shows us that in all of his preaching he laid special stress upon the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. Alas, that in our day this doctrine has been measurably page 269 lost sight of! Few Christians ever think of the resurrection. Few have ever heard a sermon upon this subject. Why is this?

We reply that it is because a great error has come in amongst Christian people in respect to the condition of the dead. According to both Catholics and Protestants, only the saintly are fit for Heaven at death. Both agree that only finished characters could properly be admitted there. Both agree to our Lord's words respecting the Kingdom: "Few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:13, 14.) Our Catholic friends tell us that nearly all mankind – heathens, Catholics and Protestants – go to Purgatory, where for centuries they will undergo terrible sufferings, which will purge them from sin and prepare them for Heaven. Many Protestant friends tell us that they do not see even this hope; that from their standpoint only the "little flock" go to Heaven; that all the great mass of mankind, unprepared for the presence of God, must go somewhere; and that the only place for them is a Hell of eternal torture, from which there will be no escape.

We shall not quarrel with either party. Both views are too horrible to be reasonable or just, not to mention loving! We prefer to go back to the words of Jesus and the Apostles, and to note that according to their teachings the dead are really dead, and that their only hope is, as the Apostle expresses it, a resurrection hope – "the hope of the resurrection," the hope "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." – Acts 24:15.

It is not the resurrection of the body that the Bible teaches, but the resurrection of the soul; and "God will give it a body" at the time of the awakening. (1 Corinthians 15:38.) We could wish that all Christian people would arouse themselves to a thorough study of the Scriptures. Then the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead would be given its proper place; and much of the fog of the Dark Ages would thus be gotten rid of – the fog

which has troubled us, saddened our hearts and turned many away from God and the Bible into infidelity.

THE COMING JUDGMENT DAY

After having heard both sides of the case, the governor-judge set it aside until Claudius Lysias, the commandant of Fort Antonia, the Roman officer who had made the arrest, should be heard. Meantime, St. Paul was given great liberty, the real status of his case evidently being quite clearly understood by Governor Felix.

Subsequently the governor, apparently much impressed by the Apostle's demeanor, called for him again, at a time when his wife, a Jewess, was present. He wished her to hear the Gospel Message, which seems to have appealed to him as reasonable. St. Paul doubtless reviewed much of his previous testimony, and then reasoned respecting a coming judgment, or trial – that eternal destinies are not fixed as a result of the present life.

Assuredly the Apostle explained that God has appointed a Day of trial, or judgment, for the whole world of mankind – the Millennial Day, a thousand years long. (2 Peter 3:7, 8.) During that period all mankind shall have a full trial as to worthiness or unworthiness of human perfection and life everlasting. The obedient shall be blessed, uplifted, raised up, up, up to perfection. The wilfully disobedient shall be destroyed in the Second Death.

"A JUST RECOMPENSE OF REWARD"

If, then, the trial of the world is to be in the future Age, and if in the present Age God is merely electing, or selecting, the Church to be the Bride of His Son and Joint-heir in the Messianic Kingdom, which is to bless the world, how could these matters have any special influence upon Felix and his wife? We reply, In two ways:

(1) It might influence them to accept Christ and to seek to be of the elect Church;

(2) Knowing of their future trial, they should know that the words and the deeds of the present life have much to do with the status of the individual when he is awakened from the tomb. The vicious, the hypocritical, the self-righteous, the wanton, the profligate, degrade themselves and increase the number of steps which they must retrace during the Millennium. On the contrary, every good deed, every victory gained, every practice of moderation, will make the individual correspondingly the better prepared for the next life. Every generous deed of the present life makes its impress upon the character, and will bring proportionate blessings in that Millennial Judgment Day. On the other hand, every evil deed, every violation of conscience, will receive its "stripes," or just punishment.

As Felix listened to the Apostle, he was conscience-stricken. According to this teaching, he would have much for which to give account as one of the "unjust" in the resurrection. We note that St. Paul said nothing about fiery tortures, which an intelligent mind must repudiate as unreasonable; but his argument was all the stronger without such assertions. His forceful declaration was, "A just recompense of reward both for the just and for the unjust." Finally the governor dismissed him with the memorable words, "Go thy way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will call for thee."

Time and again Governor Felix called for the Apostle; but apparently never did he find his heart in a sufficiently mellow and humble condition to accept the Apostle's Message and to surrender to the Lord. A lesson in this connection for us all is that we should do promptly whatever we realize to be our duty. For two years St. Paul remained a prisoner at Caesarea, comfortably provided for, preparing for the further services of his life, and writing several epistles to the various Churches.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX – R. 3194

ACTS 24:10-16,24-26

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." – Psalm 23:4

FIVE days after Paul's arrival a prisoner at Caesarea the Chief Priest, Ananias, accompanied by a public advocate and a deputation from the Sanhedrin, also appeared in the city to make charges against Paul, and the trial at once took place. The advocate, Tertullus, began his case by making very flattering allusions to the governor – very hypocritical allusions, as we know from secular histories of the time. "Both Josephus and Tacitus represent him as one of the most corrupt and oppressive rulers ever sent by the Romans into Judea."

Flattery of this kind, undeserved praise, is extremely reprehensible; totally contrary to the principles which govern the Lord's followers. It is dishonesty, hypocrisy. Nevertheless, flattery is a very powerful weapon, which the unregenerate have little scruple in using, and it frequently gives them a decided advantage in worldly affairs, in opposition to the Lord's faithful, who are restrained from such flatteries, being obliged to consider truth and honesty in all their words and dealings. Some of the Lord's people are, on the other hand, inclined to carry honesty in such matters to an extreme: many in Paul's stead would have felt it their bounden duty to have upbraided Felix roundly. It is no more obligatory upon the Lord's people to denounce every wrongdoer whom they may meet in the street than it is for them to tell all homely persons they may see of their lack along the lines of beauty. The Apostle's course in this case is an illustration of the possession of the spirit of a sound mind. When it came his turn to address the governor he neither upbraided nor reproved him, nor did he utter any words of flattery. The introduction to his defense was every word true in the fullest sense, and yet it was framed and presented in courteous and agreeable language.

Politeness is always a part of Christian character. In the world it may be polish, but in the Christian it is not merely a veneer, but represents the true sentiments of the heart, developed along the lines of the spirit of life – love. Love leads to gentleness, patience, kindness, etc., and even in the case of disobedience it will hesitate to utter an unkind word, and will avoid the same so far as duty will permit.

The advocate, or attorney, Tertullus, made serious charges against the Apostle. He would have him appear to Felix as more or less a conspirator against the Roman government – at least a raiser of tumults and seditions amongst the people. This charge was made broadly, applying not only to the present instance, the tumult at Jerusalem, but that everywhere, throughout the provinces of Rome, wherever he went, tumults arose amongst the people. It did not seem to occur to this attorney that the tumults might be caused by evildoers in their endeavor to stop the progress of righteousness and truth; the thought he endeavored to present to Felix was that whoever occasioned tumults, regardless of his plea, was to be considered an enemy to good government, law and order. The same arguments are powerful today with those who do not appreciate the true principles of justice and liberty. It will not surprise us at all if by and by the enemies of present truth take a similarly unjust stand against us, who are seeking to walk in the footsteps of the Apostle – seeking to present the truths of a new dispensation to our brethren in Babylon, who are not only themselves unwilling to hear, but are easily aroused to anger, vituperation and persecution, that they may prevent others from receiving the good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people.

When the charges had been preferred, Paul

was permitted to speak for himself, and did so to good effect. He showed **(1)** that he had but recently arrived in Jerusalem; that he had raised no riot or commotion, but that, on the contrary, at the time of his arrest he was quietly worshiping God in the Temple – disputing with nobody and interfering with nobody's rights. **(2)** He challenged his accusers to produce proofs of the truthfulness of their charges – denying their ability to prove them; and thus in a most reasonable and legal way showed that the burden of proof was upon his accusers, and not upon himself. **(3)** He did confess, however, that there was some ground for the animosity manifested against him, and this was that his fellow-Jews charged him with believing and teaching heresy – a split-off from the Jewish religion. It was his answer to the charge that he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; he denied that it was heresy against the Jewish religion, and a sect, or split-off party. It was his enemies who called Christianity heresy, and separation from Judaism, but their charges were false from the Apostle's standpoint. Christianity, instead of being split off from Judaism, was the natural outcome and proper development of it – the fulfilment of the promises of God upon which the hopes and prospects of Judaism were all built. The Apostle shows this matter most distinctly in his letter to the Romans (chap. 11), where he pictures the Jewish nation as the olive tree whose root was the Abrahamic promise, and whose branches were the people of Israel. He does not picture Christianity as another tree, nor yet as a new shoot out of this original olive tree, but he does picture it as the fuller development of this tree, representing all Jews refusing to progress and to accept of Christ, as branches that were broken off – all the true Jews who continued to be recognized of the Lord, – all the Israelites indeed, – were the Christians who from Pentecost onward have been known as spiritual Israelites.

Progressing, the Apostle justified the claim which he made at his hearing before the Sanhedrin; viz., that a serious part of the objection raised against him by his countrymen was his belief in the resurrection of the dead, which some of them also allowed, or believed, – "that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

That the Apostle preached a gospel in many particulars different from the general belief of our day, is quite evident from this presentation of it – the making prominent of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. True, some might claim that it is unnecessary to make this doctrine prominent, because there are few Sadducees today – few who deny the resurrection of the dead. We answer that there are few who believe that there are any dead. The vast majority of mankind, Christians as well as heathen, have adopted the theory that none are dead – that those who appear to die really become more alive than ever. Not believing in anybody's being dead it would be impossible for them to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Instead, another thought prevails now; viz., a resurrection of the ***body*** – the person or soul, it is claimed, does not die, but merely sheds the body as an old garment, and at some future time is to have it back. But it will be conceded that if this were all that the Apostle meant by the resurrection of the dead, – if he really meant a "resurrection of the body," his argument was a weak one. It would be foolish to waste much time or breath or energy in discussing such a proposition as would have no particular advantage or merit, even if it were proven.

The Apostle had a totally different thought: his preaching was to the effect that death is a real penalty for sin, and that there never could be life or consciousness, except by a resurrection of the dead, and that a resurrection of the dead could only come by divine favor in the accomplishment of a redemption of all that had been condemned to death. In preaching the resurrection, therefore, he was declaring not only his faith that Christ Jesus was not dead, but also his faith that God would in due time grant the world a resurrection. Thus Jesus and the resurrection constituted the sum and substance of the gospel hope from

the Apostle's standpoint and – because we take his – from our standpoint also.

The question may occur to some – if resurrection (***anastasis***) means a full, complete raising up out of death conditions into perfection of life conditions, how could the Apostle here speak of the resurrection "both of the just and unjust"?

How shall we understand this, and harmonize it with other Scriptures which declare that only the justified shall attain full perfection of life? – that he that hath the Son may have life, and he that hath not the Son shall not see life – in its perfection? – that he that will not obey the great Prophet shall be cut off from amongst his people – cut off from life, in the Second Death?

We answer that the Apostle is not carrying his argument down into the future, declaring that in the future the just ones shall attain to the full perfection of life and the unjust ones also; he is merely referring to those who in the present time are just and unjust. The just of the present time are "justified by faith," and if faithful to the conditions of the call are to have part in the First Resurrection. The unjust of the present time are the unjustified, the unbelievers, and the Apostle explains that they believe not because the god of this world hath blinded their minds. (2 Cor. 4:4.) However, as the Scriptures distinctly show, it is to be the special work of the next age to open all the blind eyes and to unstop all the deaf ears, and to cause the knowledge of the Lord to fill the whole earth, to the intent that those now unjustified, unjust, may be just before God, and thus share in the resurrection which is provided for all, and which will accomplish the resurrection of all except as its gracious provisions are individually rejected.

Having stated thus his belief in a future life, by a resurrection, the Apostle declares that his present life was being used in accordance with that hope of a future life – with a conscience that controlled his thoughts and words and deeds in relationship to God and men.

Can we wonder that Felix, perverse though he was, himself felt disinclined to yield so noble a prisoner to death, even to accommodate and please the flattering attorney and the influential high priest, whose favor he would undoubtedly prefer to hold? The record leads us additionally to infer that Felix considered that in Paul he had a good opportunity for receiving a bribe for the performance of justice; for in his narrative the Apostle proceeded to show that so far from seeking to do injury to his fellow-creatures, he had brought with him from foreign cities large sums of money. Felix thus perceived that the prisoner, who had liberal education and talent and Roman citizenship, had friends not only in Jerusalem, but abroad. He doubtless concluded that they would be quite willing to make him a handsome present to effect the Apostle's release. This is the suggestion of the 26th verse.

Apparently Felix was considerably interested in his prisoner, and mentioned him to his wife, a Jewess: he was called before them, that they might know further respecting this new teaching. His curiosity was evidently soon more than satisfied, as the Apostle proceeded with his subject, showing the plan of God, the righteousness of the Law, the inability of fallen man to fully meet its requirements, that Jesus became the Redeemer of those condemned by the Law, and that now salvation and life eternal are open to as many as will obey the gospel – forsake sin and lay hold by faith upon the Redeemer. The Apostle proceeded to show that righteousness was the reasonable requirement of the divine Law, and that the acceptance of God's favor in Christ led to self-restraint and opposition to natural tendencies, and that there is a judgment day to come, in the which all deflections from righteousness will be rewarded with stripes proportionate to knowledge. The governor trembled; his own wicked life and licentious course stood out before his mental gaze, and he realized that, according to the standards presented, he

Paul before Felix

would have many stripes to bear in the future. His wife, Drusilla, was really the wife of King Azizus; but her conscience, evidently more seared than his, seems not to have been in the least agitated. Felix suggested that at a more convenient season he would hear further of the gospel; but we doubt if ever he called for any further explanations – he already had enough, more than he was willing to obey. His course is one too frequently imitated since. Many who tremble as they think of their sins, hope that a more convenient time for breaking off may come to them; but a convenient season for abandoning sin – when sin indulged in our members will make no objection to being ousted – will never come. He who would become a follower of the Lord Jesus, must courageously accept of Christ, the power divine for the breaking of the shackles of his slavery to sin – must first love the liberty wherewith Christ alone can make us free. Those who have not this craving will remain slaves of sin until the glorious Millennial morning shall break, until after the completion of the election Church of "overcomers" – until the dawning of the Millennial morning, when the overcomers, with Christ at their head, shall break all the shackles of sin and set all prisoners free, and command all to render obedience to the laws of the Kingdom of God, inflicting stripes of punishment proportionate to their present wilfulness in sin, with a view to their recovery, and for restitution to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed with the precious blood.

A good lesson may be learned from the Apostle's method of presenting the truth to Felix. He did not attack the governor's character, nor berate him for his sins. He did better than this. Ignoring the individual entirely, he lifted the mirror of the perfect law of love and liberty and righteousness before the governor, and let him see for himself how far short he came of the perfect standard which alone God can approve. Would that all of God's children could learn thus to reprove sin – by letting the light of truth and the corroboration of the same in their own conduct shine out – their words, and no less their conduct, being epistles of the grace of God and his gracious arrangements, both for rewarding those who seek him and for chastening and correcting those who require it!

The courage of the Apostle in holding up the truth before one who so largely had to do with the decision of his own case is remarkable and commendable. It is in full agreement with the declaration of our Golden Text. Those who are on the Lord's side, and who, therefore, have the Lord on their side, in all of life's

affairs, need fear no evil. This absence of fear, however, should not in us, any more than in the Apostle, lead to bravado or discourteous manner or language. The divine rule is, as expressed by the Apostle, that we should speak the truth in love. – Eph. 4:15.

Another lesson taught us by the Apostle's experiences, yea, by all of the Lord's notable children, from the Master down, is that the assaults of calumny, slander, etc., can do them no lasting harm. Look at the Captain of our salvation, against whom all manner of evil was said and done falsely, even to the extent of calling him the prince of devils, and crucifying him as a blasphemer of God. How those assaults of the great Adversary, through his deluded children of disobedience, serve now to make the Lord's character and conduct the more transparent and resplendent! So also it is in respect to the Apostle Paul's experiences – they all reflect grandly upon his character today. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" gives a scene which illustrates this feature of our lesson and encourages all of us to disregard the slanders and evil speakings of the present time, if so be that we can continually realize the divine favor and blessing with us and upon our efforts to serve the Lord. We give an extract from Bunyan's writings as follows: –

"Then the shepherds had the pilgrims to another place, called Mount Innocence, and there they saw a man clothed all in white, and two men, Prejudice and Ill-will, continually casting dirt upon him. Now behold, the dirt, whatsoever they cast at him, would in a little time fall off again, and his garment would look as clean as if no dirt had been cast thereat. Then said the pilgrims, 'What means this?' The shepherds answered, 'This man is named Godly-man, and this garment is to show the innocency of his life. Now, those that throw dirt at him are such as hate his well-doing; but, as you see, the dirt will not stick upon his clothes; so it shall be with him that liveth innocently in the world. Whoever they be that would make such men dirty, they labor all in vain; for God, by that a little time is spent, will cause that their innocence shall break forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noon-day.'"

But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix, and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

Acts 24:27

Paul before Festus

9 Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"
10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.
11 "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying, but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."

Acts 25:9-11

THE APPEAL TO CAESAR – R. 5960

ACTS 25:1-12

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Teacher, and the servant as his Lord."
– Matthew 10:25 (R.V.)

FELIX, the Roman governor of Judea, was succeeded by Festus; and, willing to carry favor with the Jews, he left St. Paul a prisoner, although confessedly he had found the Apostle not guilty of any infraction of the Roman law and was persuaded that his enemies were frantically jealous of him. The two years of St. Paul's imprisonment doubtless afforded excellent opportunities for his mature study of the Divine Plan set forth in the Scriptures.
It is impossible for us at this distance even to surmise with any accuracy what may have been the Lord's object in permitting His faithful representative to be thus isolated and debarred from the privileges of service. On the one hand, it may have been to give the Apostle rest, quiet, opportunity for further study of the Truth. On the other hand, it may have been to teach him a lesson of patience, submission and confidence in God – that his services were not indispensable; that while the Lord had not let go of him and would ultimately deliver him, yet he was not indispensable to the Divine Plan. These are important lessons for all of God's people to learn – particularly all who are in any prominent way identified with His service.

Or it may have been that the Lord had a work for the Apostle to do at Caesarea, where possibly he had contact with the officers of the garrison, and where they would have opportunities for observing the man and for appreciating the power of God to uphold him in his adversities. We may be sure that the Apostle let his light shine on every proper occasion; and we may be sure also that his labor was "not in vain in the Lord," whatever it was and however it was accepted or made useful in the interests of others. Even if he had no opportunity for serving others and if the work of grace were accomplished in his own heart, it was not in vain; and faith commands us to accept the matter without doubt respecting the wisdom of the arrangement.

ST. PAUL'S CASE BROUGHT TO FESTUS

Festus, the new governor, went at once to Jerusalem, the center of his province, there to become acquainted with the chief men of the people amongst whom he must preside as governor and judge. He was of a totally different character from his predecessor. St. Paul styles him "noble Festus," and history confirms the appellation.

St. Paul's enemies were on the alert to accomplish against him through the new governor what they had failed to do with Felix. Taking advantage of the fact that a new official would naturally desire to make a favorable impression in respect to prompt dealings with prisoners charged with sedition, rioting, disloyalty, the Jewish rulers quickly brought St. Paul's case to the attention of Festus. However, after setting forth the arguments of Tertullus to prejudice the governor's mind, they feared to have a trial before him because of the weakness of their cause; for they had no witnesses to any wrong-doing on the Apostle's part which could be recognized as against Roman law or the privileges of a Roman citizen.

Apparently their explanation was that the Apostle's conduct had been an assault upon their religion, along lines which the Roman governor, unacquainted with their religious customs, would not be prepared to appreciate. Hence they proposed to Festus that, after all, their dispute with St. Paul was more along religious than civil lines, and that therefore the desirable thing would be that the prisoner should be delivered to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem for trial according to Jewish Law.

Meantime, plans had been matured whereby in the name of God and religion, and "the good of the cause," the Apostle was to be assassinated on the way to Jerusalem.

Alas, that such criminal injustice cannot be charged against the Jews of that Age alone; but in every Age, and in almost every religious system, the mental unbalance is such that in the heat of the moment atrocious crimes have been advocated and perpetrated in the name of God and holiness! What lessons we may learn from these excerpts of history! When will mankind learn that as Justice is the foundation of the Divine Government (Psalm 97:2), everything contrary thereto must be displeasing to God? When shall we learn that the results of injustice will ultimately be more injurious to the doer than to the injured?

ST. PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Governor Festus acknowledged his ignorance of the religion of the Jews, and made no objection to the trial of the prisoner by the religious court of his countrymen. On his return to Caesarea, he placed the proposition of the Jews before St. Paul, asking him – because the Apostle was a Roman citizen – whether he was willing to accept a discharge as respected the Roman Court and to stand trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin.

The Apostle promptly replied that he would not consent to this; that as a Roman citizen he had a right to Roman privileges, and therefore appealed his case to Caesar's court at Rome, the imperial capital. He well knew the animosity of his countrymen, and realized that those who were ready to assassinate him two years before were probably still unchanged in heart.

St. Paul's course furnishes a good example for all of the Lord's people in similar circumstances. It is a mistake, made by some well-meaning members of the Lord's family, to suppose that the Master's teaching of non-resistance signifies that His followers should put forth no efforts on their own behalf. It is our privilege to avail ourselves of every right granted to us by the laws of the country in which we live. It is proper for us to appeal to higher or better courts if we can, to obtain that justice which might not be obtainable in lower courts. But having exhausted all such legal resources and remedies, the Lord's people are to be submissive to the results – not grumblers, not resisters of the decisions of the law.

Another matter worthy of notice is that, so far as the records show, the Apostle did not berate nor calumniate his people or the Sanhedrin or others associated as his prosecutors and persecutors. The lesson for the Lord's people today is to speak evil of no man. Take advantage of every legal right and privilege and opportunity, and accept the final results as of God.

KING AGRIPPA ASKED TO ASSIST FESTUS

Festus was placed in a peculiar position. In sending the Apostle to Rome, as he was obliged to do in the case of appeal of a Roman citizen, he must of necessity send some charges; and being a just man, he desired that the charges should be truthfully stated. Therefore he was puzzled to know what charges, if any, he could formulate against the Apostle.

Shortly after this, the ceremonies of the inauguration of Festus took place in Caesarea. King Agrippa of Galilee did his respects by attending. Although an Edomite, the king professed the Hebrew faith; and Festus, who had no knowledge thereof, embraced the opportunity to have assistance in formulating charges against St. Paul, whose crime, if any, could be understood only from the Jewish standpoint, hence the Apostle was called to give, before the king, the chief captains of the military forces and the prominent citizens, his version of the enmity of his people against him.

The Apostle Paul Explains the Tenets of Fatih to King Agrippa by Surikov Vasily, 1875

13 And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.
14 When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix, . . .

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."
23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

Acts 25:13-14; 22-23

PREACHING CHRIST TO THE RULERS – R. 4500

ACTS 25:6; 26:32

"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." – 2 Timothy 1:12

THE Roman governor, Felix, of Judea, was succeeded by Festus, and, willing to curry favor with the Jews, he left Paul a prisoner, although confessedly he had found him not guilty of any infraction of the Roman law and was persuaded that his enemies were frantically jealous of him. The two years of St. Paul's imprisonment doubtless afforded excellent opportunities for his mature study of the Divine Plan set forth in the Scriptures.

Festus, the new governor, went at once to Jerusalem, the center of his province, there to become acquainted with the chief men of the people, amongst whom he must preside as governor and judge. St. Paul's enemies were on the alert to accomplish against him through the new governor what they failed to do with Felix. However, after setting forth the arguments of Tertullus to prejudice his mind, they feared to have a trial before him, because of the weakness of their cause. Hence they proposed to Festus that after all the dispute with St. Paul was more along religious than civil lines, and that therefore the desirable thing would be that he should be delivered to the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem for trial, according to the Jewish law, and drop the charges against him before the Roman Court. Meantime the plans had been matured whereby in the name of God and religion and the "good of the cause" the Apostle was to be assassinated on the journey. Alas that such criminal injustice cannot be charged against the Jews of that age alone, but that in every age and in almost every religious system the mental unbalance is such that in the heat of the moment atrocious crimes have been advocated and perpetrated in the name of God and holiness! What lessons we may learn from these excerpts of history! When will mankind learn that as justice is the foundation of the Divine Government, everything contrary thereto must be displeasing to God? Recently the civilized world celebrated the birth of that great and good man, John Calvin; yet all were shocked afresh as we remembered that his hand signed the death-warrant which led Servetus, a fellow-Christian, to the stake. When will we learn that the results of injustice will be more injurious to the doer than to the done? "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne." – Psa. 89:14.

ST. PAUL, FESTUS AND AGRIPPA

The governor placed the proposition of the Jews before St. Paul, asking him (because he was a Roman citizen) whether he were willing to accept a discharge as respected the Roman Court and to stand trial before his own countrymen. The Apostle, realizing the situation, promptly declined the offer and instead appealed his case to Rome, his privilege as a Roman citizen, which could not be denied him. But as the governor in sending a prisoner to Rome was expected to prefer charges, Festus was puzzled to know what charges, if any, he could formulate against the Apostle.

Shortly the ceremonies of Festus' inauguration took place in Caesarea, and King Agrippa of Galilee did his respects by attending, his wife Bernice accompanying him. As Agrippa and his wife professed the Hebrew faith, Festus, who had no knowledge thereof, embraced the opportunity to have their assistance in formulating charges against St. Paul, whose crime, if any, could be understood from the Jewish standpoint. Hence before these and the chief captains of the military forces and the prominent citizens, the Apostle was called to give his version of the enmity of his people against him.

Thus a fresh opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel before people of prominence was afforded the Apostle. And his appeal to Caesar's Court would mean an introduction of himself and of the religion which he represented before the highest authority in the world. Thus does the Lord mysteriously work the counsel of his own will and cause the wrath of men to praise him. And thus does he put before his faithful servants fresh opportunities to serve his cause. How much every faithful follower of Jesus should be encouraged by this to faithfulness, to singleness of heart, to the improvement of every opportunity, realizing the Lord's supervision of the work and of his service.

As a true gentleman, St. Paul opened his speech before these earthly dignitaries by complimenting King Agrippa as much as he truthfully could – on the fact that he would be heard by one who was expert in all Jewish matters. He pointed to the fact that his course of life from youth was well known in Jerusalem and throughout the Jewish nation. Many of them could witness if they would to his strictness as a religionist. "And now," he declared, "I am standing on trial for my hope in the promise which God made unto our fathers – a promise which all Jews are hoping will have fulfilment. Nevertheless it is for this hope's sake that I am accused by the Jews." The hope of Israel centered in God's oath-bound Covenant to Abraham, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." St. Paul was preaching that this promise was in process of fulfilment; that Jesus, as the Son of God, by obedience to the Law and by his sacrifice of his earthly rights, had become the Head of this promised Seed of Abraham by his resurrection to the plane of spirit glory, honor and immortality. He was teaching that since Pentecost the Lord was selecting both from Jews and Gentiles a "little flock," to be Messiah's bride and joint-heir, members of the Spiritual Seed of Abraham; and that when this selection shall have been accomplished, the great Messiah, Head and members, in glory will set up the long-promised Kingdom of God. Its blessing will come first to natural Israel for their restitutional uplifting, and subsequently will extend through Israel to "all the families of the earth."

Surely St. Paul pointed to the prophecies which tell of the sufferings of Messiah and of the glories that will follow. The Jews all knew of the sufferings of Jesus and the sufferings of his followers, but they disputed his resurrection to glory and that his followers would by and by share his resurrection change. The whole dispute between himself and the Jews was in respect to whether or not Jesus arose from the dead. If he did not arise the Jews were right. No valid hopes could be built upon a dead man, however good he might have been. If he arose, St. Paul and the followers of Jesus were right, because his resurrection to glory should be considered a demonstration of Divine approval and of the Messiahship which he claimed and of his Kingdom to come in due time.

He explained how once he also had opposed Jesus and persecuted his followers, shutting them up in prison and giving his vote with others for their death. He had compelled them to blaspheme Jesus to escape sufferings and in his madness had extended his energies from Jerusalem to outside cities. He explained the Revelation of the Lord, given him near Damascus – the light above the brightness of the sun, and the voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." He explained the commission he then received, that he was to preach to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, the resurrection of Jesus, the gathering of his elect members and in due time the establishment of his Kingdom; and that all should repent and turn to God. It was for these things that he was in bondage and his life in jeopardy, until he was obliged to appeal to Caesar's tribunal. He pointed out that the sufferings of Christ had been foretold by the prophets and that Jesus acknowledged persecutions of his followers as being of himself – his members.

"THOU ART BESIDE THYSELF"

The governor heard with amazement the recital and, interrupting, then said, "Thou art beside thyself. Much learning doth make thee mad." But St. Paul replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness: King Agrippa knoweth of these things." Thus it is still. From the worldly standpoint the true follower of Jesus is branded a fanatic, a fool, unbalanced. But from the Christian's standpoint the view is reversed – the worldly are unwise and money-mad. The worldly see merely the earthly things, the transitory. The Christian sees with the eye of faith glory, honor and immortality and a share with the Redeemer in the privileges of the Millennial Kingdom, which is shortly to bless the world with a reign of righteousness, in fulfilment of the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

St. Paul appealed to Agrippa: Did he not believe the prophecies cited? The reply of the king is a matter of dispute – whether he said, "With a little more time and eloquence you might persuade me to be a Christian," or whether he said, "Do you think that in so brief an argument you could make of me a Christian, with all that that word means of discredit?" St. Paul's reply favors the former interpretation: "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

A nobler sentiment, a broader spirit of charity, in a prison, falsely accused and unjustly restrained, cannot be imagined. Only those who have been with Jesus and learned of him could thus exemplify the sympathy and moderation which he taught. Oh, that all of Christ's disciples might learn also to be meek and lowly of heart and find rest to their souls, for who can doubt that St. Paul, the prisoner, with his glorious hopes, was happier every way than any of those who heard him?

ST. PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE KING AGRIPPA – R. 5960

ACTS 26:1, 24-32

"I was not disobedient unto the Heavenly vision." – Acts 26:19

OUR last Study showed us that St. Paul's appeal to Caesar's Court afforded the Apostle an opportunity of preaching the Gospel before people of prominence whom he could otherwise never have expected to reach. He seems to have appreciated the occasion thoroughly; for he made a stirring address, the theme of which was the circumstances of his own conversion, narrated here for the third time. We cannot doubt that he was guided of the Lord in the matter. Thus does God mysteriously work the counsel of His own will and cause the wrath of men to praise Him; and thus does He put before His faithful servants fresh opportunities to serve His cause. How much every faithful follower of Jesus should be encouraged by this to continued faithfulness, to singleness of heart, to the improvement of every opportunity, realizing the Lord's supervision of His work!

As a true gentleman, St. Paul opened his speech by complimenting King Agrippa, as much as he truthfully could, on the fact that he would be heard by one who was expert in all Jewish matters. He pointed to the fact that his course of life from youth was well known in Jerusalem and throughout the Jewish nation. If his countrymen would, many of them could witness to his strictness as a religionist. "And now," he declared, "I am standing on trial for my hope in the promise which God made unto our fathers – a promise which all Jews are

hoping will have fulfilment. Nevertheless it is for this hope's sake that I am accused by the Jews."

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

The hope of Israel centered in God's Oath-Bound Covenant to Abraham: "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3; 22:15-18.) St. Paul was preaching that this Promise was in process of fulfilment; that Jesus of Nazareth, as the Son of God, by obedience to the Law and by His sacrifice of His earthly rights, had become the Head of this promised Seed of Abraham by His resurrection to the plane of spirit glory, honor and immortality. Moreover, the Apostle was teaching that since Pentecost the Lord was selecting from both Jews and Gentiles a "little flock," to be Messiah's Bride and Joint-heir, members of the Spiritual Seed of Abraham; and that when this selection shall have been accomplished, The Messiah, Head and Body, in glory will set up the long-promised Kingdom of God, through which blessings will come first to Natural Israel for their restitutional uplift, and subsequently will extend through Israel to all the families of the earth. – Galatians 3:8, 16, 29; Romans 11:7-15.

Surely St. Paul pointed to the prophecies which tell of the sufferings of Messiah and of the glories that will follow! All the Jews knew of the sufferings of Jesus and His followers; but they disputed His resurrection to glory and the hope that His followers would by and by share His resurrection change. The whole dispute between himself and the Jews was in respect to whether or not Jesus arose from the dead. If He did not arise, the Jews were right. No valid hopes could be built upon a dead man, however good he might have been. If He arose, St. Paul and the followers of Jesus were right; for his resurrection to glory should be considered a demonstration of Divine approval and of the Messiahship which He had claimed and of His Kingdom to come at the time appointed.

St. Paul explained how once he also had opposed Jesus and had persecuted His followers, shutting them up in prison and giving his vote with others for their death. He had even compelled them to blaspheme Jesus to escape sufferings; and in his madness he had extended his energies from Jerusalem to outside cities. He described the revelation of the Lord given him near Damascus – the light above the brightness of the sun, and the voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? . . . I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

Then he explained the commission he had received from the Lord on that occasion – that he was to preach to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, the resurrection of Jesus, the gathering of His elect members and, in due time, the establishment of His Kingdom; and that he was to declare that all should repent and turn to God. It was for these things that he was in bondage and his life in jeopardy, until he was obliged to appeal to Caesar's tribunal. He pointed out that the sufferings of Christ had been foretold by the Prophets; and that Jesus acknowledged persecution of His followers as being persecution of Himself – His members.

"THOU ART BESIDE THYSELF!"

Governor Festus heard with amazement the Apostle's recital. Then, interrupting the speaker, he said, "Thou are beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad." But St. Paul replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. King Agrippa knoweth of these things."

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the Millennial Kingdom, which is shortly to bless the world with a Reign of righteousness, in fulfilment of the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as in Heaven."

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MANY WILL BE AMAZED AT OPPORTUNITIES NEGLECTED

The time will come, and it is not far distant now, when many who now are highly esteemed amongst men for their wisdom, will be seen to have been foolish; and many who are now esteemed fools for Christ's sake and for the Gospel's sake will be seen to have been truly wise in choosing the Heavenly things and in being willing to surrender the earthly for the attainment of the Heavenly, because it is impossible to serve God and Mammon.

It is presumed upon reasonable grounds that, although King Agrippa did not become a Christian, this knowledge of the principles underlying Christianity remained with him and influenced him during the remainder of his life. History tells us that in the subsequent persecutions that arose in connection with the trouble coming upon the Jewish nation King Agrippa received and kindly entreated the Christians who fled to him for protection.

How many there are in Christian lands who have heard the Gospel Message more or less distinctly and have been "almost persuaded" to lay hold of the grace of God, but who neglect opportunities of action and have lost their appreciation of the privilege! These, like King Agrippa, will have comparatively small conception of the wonderful things which they came so near grasping and yet missed. When they shall come forth from the grave and enjoy the great privileges of the Millennial Kingdom, it will amaze them to know what great opportunities they had to become members of the Little Flock, the Lord's associates on the Throne.

"ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME" – R. 3196

ACTS 26:19-29

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day."

PAUL remained a prisoner at Caesarea two years – until the recall of Felix to Rome. According to history, the latter had given ground for much complaint by the use of his office, and in order to placate the Jews, and to avoid further animosities, he left Paul a prisoner, instead of doing him the justice of acknowledging that he had committed no crime and, therefore, had full right to his liberty. It is impossible for us at this distance even to surmise with any accuracy what may have been the Lord's object in permitting his faithful representative to be thus isolated, and debarred from the privileges of service. On the one hand, it may have been to give the Apostle rest, quiet, opportunity for further study of the truth. On the other hand, it may have been to teach him a lesson of patience, submission and confidence in God; – that his services were not indispensable; that while the Lord had not let go of him, and would ultimately deliver him, he was not indispensable to the divine plan. These are important lessons for all of God's people to learn, and particularly all who are in any prominent way identified with his service.

On the other hand, it may be that the Lord had a work for the Apostle to do at Caesarea, where possibly he had contact with the officers of the garrison – and where they would have opportunities for observing the man and appreciating the power of God to uphold him in his adversities. We may be sure that the Apostle let his light shine on every proper occasion, and we may be sure also that his labor was "not in vain in the Lord," whatever it was, and however it was accepted or made useful in the interests of others. If, even, he had no opportunity for serving others, and the work of grace were accomplished in his own heart, it was not in vain, and faith commands us to accept the matter without doubt respecting the wisdom of the arrangement.

Festus, the successor of Felix as Roman governor, was of a totally different character from his predecessor. The Apostle styles him "noble Festus," and history confirms the appellation. The Jewish rulers, taking advantage of the fact that a new governor would naturally desire to make a favorable impression in respect to prompt dealing with prisoners charged with sedition, rioting, disloyalty, etc., quickly brought Paul's case to the attention of Festus. Doubtless their charges were the same as those made before Felix, coupled with suggestions, perhaps, that Felix had been rather lax in his dealings, and that they doubted not that the new governor, appointed by the emperor as a more capable person, would, on the contrary, show his thoroughgoing character by bringing all such offenders to justice. Apparently, however, they realized that it would be useless to attempt to try the case before the governor, since they had no witnesses to any wrong-doing which he could recognize as against Roman law or the privileges of a Roman citizen. Apparently their explanation was that the Apostle's conduct had been an assault upon their religion, along lines which the Roman governor, unacquainted with their religion, would not be prepared to appreciate. They therefore asked that the prisoner be tried before the Sanhedrin. The governor acknowledged his ignorance of the religion of the Jews, and made no objection to the trial of the prisoner by the religious court of his countrymen; but the Apostle was a Roman, and since he claimed Roman citizenship it was not permissible to turn him over to his countrymen for trial unless with his consent. The matter, therefore, was appealed to the Apostle: was he willing to be released as a Roman prisoner, and to be turned over to his countrymen for trial, according to their usages in religious matters? The Apostle promptly replied that he would not consent to this; that

as a Roman citizen he had a right to Roman privileges, and therefore appealed his case to Caesar's court at the capital city. He well knew the animosity of his countrymen, and that those who were ready to assassinate him two years before were probably still unchanged in heart. The Apostle's course furnishes a good example for all of the Lord's people in similar circumstances. It is a mistake, made by some well-meaning members of the Lord's family, to suppose that the Master's teaching of nonresistance means that they should put forth no efforts on their own behalf. It is our privilege to avail ourselves of every right granted to us by the laws of the country in which we live. It is proper for us to appeal to higher or better courts if we can, to obtain that justice which might not be obtainable in lower courts. But having exhausted all such legal resources and remedies, the Lord's people are to be submissive to the results – not anarchists, not grumblers, not resisters of the decisions of the law. Another matter worthy of notice is that, so far as the records show, the Apostle did not berate or calumniate his people, the Sanhedrin or others associated as his prosecutors and persecutors. The lesson for the Lord's people today is to speak evil of no man; take advantage of every legal right and privilege and opportunity, and accept the final results as the providence of God.

Festus was placed in a peculiar position; in sending the Apostle to Rome, as he was obliged to do in the case of appeal of a Roman citizen, he must of necessity send some charges, and being a just man he desired that the charges should be truthfully stated. Confessing himself to be ignorant of the Jewish religion, he asked King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, who were nominal Jews (really Edomites), to hear the Apostle's explanation of his case, that he might advise him respecting how serious were the divergencies between Christians and Jews in doctrine.

The invitation was accepted, and the Apostle began his address before the king and queen and the Roman governor, and, doubtless, quite a retinue of officers and soldiers. Here was an opportunity for preaching the Gospel to the people, whom the Apostle could otherwise never have expected to reach. He appears to have appreciated the occasion thoroughly, and made a stirring address, his text being the circumstances of his own conversion – narrated here for the third time. We cannot doubt that he was guided of the Lord in the matter, and it offers the suggestion to all ministers of the truth that nothing is apt to appeal more quickly to others than those things which have appealed to ourselves. Every minister of the truth, to speak heartily and forcefully, should speak from conviction, and the conviction should be backed by reasonable and positive evidences. Nothing could appeal to his hearers more strongly than the fact that he admitted that he had been a persecutor of the Christians himself, before he saw the way of the Lord more perfectly, and that now, seeing the Lord's way, he was sacrificing all that man could hold dear in his service of the truth.

The fact that the Apostle was addressing royalty did not hinder him from bringing out the salient features of the gospel, and these are, we fear, too frequently forgotten by many. **(1)** Repentance from sin; **(2)** turning to God to seek his favor, to know and to do his will; **(3)** the doing of good works, and thereby showing that repentance was sincere. Because our present work is very largely that of "reaping" rather than "sowing," we have less need to appeal to those who are living in sin and alienation from God, and needing reformation of life; but whenever we have occasion to present the message of the Lord to some or to any whom we have reason to believe are not living in harmony with the requirements of the gospel along these lines, we should be careful, as the Apostle was, to leave no room for misunderstanding – no room for thinking that the gospel of Christ is sympathy with uncleanness, impurity of heart or life, sin, selfishness or evil deeds.

We are here informed, though not elsewhere,

that the Apostle had at some time in his experience preached the gospel throughout all the country of Judea – evidently before he went to Antioch and engaged in the general work amongst Gentiles – possibly during the two years prior to his first going to Antioch. The Apostle thus showed his auditors that his work had not been exclusively to the Jews nor exclusively to the Gentiles, but to both according to opportunity. It is for this cause, he declares – because realizing the change of dispensation by which God's grace was not confined any longer to the Jews only – that the Jews specially hated him and seized him in the Temple, and attempted to kill him. It was the selfishness on the part of the Jews that made the Apostle specially obnoxious to them. They were opposed to Jesus, but specially opposed to the giving of his gospel to the Gentiles – the teaching that the Gentiles might now, in any sense of the word, enjoy equal privileges with the Jews in respect to God's favor, etc.

In referring to the preservation of his life, the Apostle does not give credit to Lysias, the commander of the garrison at Jerusalem, but declares that he obtained help of God, by whom he had been sustained to the time of his speaking. Doubtless on a proper occasion the Apostle would have been quite willing to have given Lysias full credit for promptness in preserving his life; but speaking from the highest standpoint of his own appreciation and ours, he gave the credit for his deliverance to the Lord. There is a good lesson in this for all of the Lord's people. How apt many are to give credit to "luck" or "chance" or human instrumentality, overlooking the fact that the Lord's saints are the special objects of his care, and that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them and delivereth them.

The next sentence intimates that during the two years of the Apostle's imprisonment he had been witnessing, preaching the gospel, both to small and great – such of the soldiers or servants or commanders of the camp as seemed to have a hearing ear undoubtedly were communicated with. We may be sure that the Apostle slackened not at any time his endeavors to serve the great Master, the Captain of our salvation, as a true soldier and faithful servant. So, too, should we continue to serve, even when apparently the most favorable opportunities are withheld from us. "Thou knowest not which shall prosper, either this or that." – Eccl. 11:6.

We should notice what the Apostle specially testified, and consider it a clue to our most favorable testimonies in the interest of the same cause. He doubtless presented the subject from various standpoints at different times; but the essence, the substance, of his message on all occasions was the death and resurrection of Christ, as the one in whom were fulfilled the types of the Jewish Law and the declarations of the prophets. He did not stop with declaring the death and resurrection, but pointed to the ultimate legitimate results of these – that they meant that eventually the true light should shine unto all the Jewish people and also to the Gentiles – "This is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is in vain that we attempt to preach any other gospel – no other will be considered acceptable by him whom we would serve. We find, on the contrary, some today preaching a coming blessing of a new age and its light and favors to mankind, but denying the Scriptural foundation for such hopes – the death of Christ as our redemption price, and his resurrection, that he might be our Helper and Deliverer. Others, too, state the matter from a different standpoint, claiming that the favor of God and the blessing of forgiveness through Christ is to extend even to the heathen – but without light; that they will be saved in their darkness and heathenism. Let all who would ultimately hear the Master's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," be careful to preach the same gospel that the Apostle proclaimed; viz., the one based upon the ransom sacrifice of Christ, attested by his resurrection, on account of which the Lord is yet to be (during the Millennial age) the true light that will lighten every man, every member of our race, and bring to each and to

all not only the blessings of opportunity but also tests and proportionate responsibility.

King Agrippa was evidently considerably informed along the lines of the teaching of the Law and the Prophets, for the Apostle appealed to him as able to corroborate his presentations respecting the Law and the Prophets; but Festus the Gentile, who had no knowledge of Jewish hopes and promises, was astounded as he heard the Apostle's line of argument – doubtless much more extended than is presented in the record. Interrupting the Apostle by speaking still louder than he, Festus cried, "Paul, thou art beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad!" – your head is turned; you are painting fancy pictures when you tell us of a great God, our Creator, and that he cares for us, his creatures, and has provided for our redemption through the sacrifice of his Son, and that he has raised him from the dead, and is ultimately to send a blessing to every member of our race. Surely this is your own imagination! It is a wonderful picture, astounding to me who, as a Gentile, never had so connected a presentation respecting any of the deities of whom I have heard by the thousand.

Truth is stranger than fiction, and it is no wonder that some today, like Festus of old, find it hard to believe in the goodness and wonderful provision that our heavenly Father has made for his creatures. Today, if some of our worldly friends note our enthusiasm for the Lord, his brethren and his truth, it all seems very different from any religious sentiments or feelings, hopes or ambitions they have entertained, and they are inclined to say of us also that our heads are a little turned. They think it not strange if men become enthusiastic about politics or money-making, because such enthusiasm is common to men; everybody is more or less excited and interested in money-getting and in politics. But when it comes to religion, they say to themselves, no one knows anything about this matter; it is all pure speculation, and these people must be crazy when they think of their religion as being tangible, worthy of self-denial and the enduring of persecutions. We admit that no romance of earth ever equaled this one of the divine arrangement for man's salvation: – the fall; the calamity of death and disease, mental, physical and moral; the sending of God's own son; his offering of himself as the sin-offering on our behalf; his resurrection and ascension to glory, honor and power; the gathering of a little flock to be his Bride and joint-heir in the Kingdom; and, by and by, the establishment of a Kingdom for the blessing and enlightenment of all the families of the earth. No novel, no plot of human concoction, could ever equal this one. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. We cannot wonder if those who see from the outside – who do not see the strength and beauty and consistency and harmony from the inside standpoint – consider that we who see matters from the right standpoint are too much enthused. They cannot appreciate the fact that we accept gladly the privilege of self-sacrifice, in order thereby to attest our love and devotion to the Lord and to be accounted worthy a share with him as members of his Church, his Bride.

The time will come, and it is not far distant now, when many who are now highly esteemed amongst men for their wisdom, will be seen to have been foolish, and many who are now esteemed fools for Christ's sake and for the gospel's sake, will be seen to have been truly wise in choosing the heavenly things and in being willing to surrender the earthly things for the attainment of the heavenly, because it is impossible to serve God and Mammon.

The Apostle's answer to Festus was not flattery, but Christian courtesy. Festus was a noble man, and it is not improper to speak the truth in reasonable language, and to give a merited compliment. "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness." So, when we answer the world, let us remember the difference of standpoint, and that our privilege of seeing the deep things of God is the result of our having been accepted

of him through consecration and obedience, receiving the spirit of the Anointed, whereby we can know the things freely given unto us of God.

The Apostle appealed to the king for corroboration of the things he declared, evidently well assured that the declaration of the gospel had created so much commotion amongst the Jews that the king had heard thereof repeatedly. The thing was not done in a corner; it was a public matter of general knowledge, and had Festus been living in the country he would not question the facts.

The Apostle appealed to Agrippa in a most earnest and dignified tone. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." The intimation is that the Apostle had in this discourse set forth the fulfillment of the prophecies so fully, so explicitly, that anyone believing them to be inspired could not doubt that Jesus was the Messiah. This led to the notable words of Agrippa, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The New Testament revisers evidently considered this language ironical, but it does not so seem to us. The Apostle's rejoinder seems to contradict that thought, "I would that thou wert not only almost but altogether such as I am – except these bonds." It is presumed upon reasonable grounds that, although Agrippa did not become a Christian, this knowledge of the principles underlying Christianity remained with him and influenced him during the remainder of his life. History tells us that in the subsequent persecutions that arose in connection with the trouble coming upon the Jewish nation Agrippa received and kindly entreated the Christians who fled to him for protection.

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"I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Acts 25:26-27

Paul sets sail for Rome

When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

Acts 27:1-3

A TEMPEST-TOSSED PRISONER OF HOPE – R. 4505

ACTS 27:1-26

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."
– Psalm 37:5

FESTUS, governor of Judea, sent St. Paul and other prisoners to Rome, the former with no derogatory charges against him. There was no direct intercourse between Rome and the little port of Caesarea; hence for a distance of six hundred miles the journey was made by a small trading vessel. This journey lasted from about the middle of August to September 1st – good speed for a sailing vessel in those days, but the weather was fine. At Myra, St. Paul and two of the brethren who accompanied him (Luke and Aristarchus) and the guard and the other prisoners were transferred to an Egyptian vessel laden with a cargo of wheat, enroute for Rome and bearing a considerable number of passengers besides the crew – in all two hundred and seventy-six persons. The pleasant weather continued for several days and then it became stormy. The vessel abandoned her intended route to get into the lea of the Island of Crete and tarried at the port of Fair Havens for better weather. Thus they were delayed until about October 1st, the Jewish New Year's Day and a fast day and the time for equinoctial storms.

St. Paul drew attention to the dangers of continuing the journey and advised that they winter there, but those in authority concluded that they would go to Phenice, a larger port. But before they had gone far a northeast wind (typhonic) struck the vessel suddenly and they were obliged to go with the wind to the southward and came under the shelter of the little Island Cauda. Here they undergirded the ship by placing chains and ropes under her keel, because the weight of the cargo of wheat and the severity of the storm had strained her. They lowered the gearing of the sails and continued to drive before the wind, guarding against sand banks. The ship labored heavily in the storm; part of her cargo was thrown overboard; later on she was further lightened by casting overboard her heavier furniture, tackle, etc. The storm continued for several days. Neither sun nor stars were visible, and the captain could not tell his whereabouts, for the compass had not yet been invented. Hence all aboard were gradually abandoning hope. They had ceased to eat and were almost in despair.

Then came the opportunity for St. Paul's message of cheer. He reminded them that they should have followed his advice and stayed at Fair Havens and not have sustained the loss and injury. But he bade them be of good cheer, for their lives would all be preserved, though the ship be destroyed. In explanation of his confidence he related that the angel of God whom he served stood by him in the night saying, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a desert island."

CALM IN A TIME OF STORM

The true Christian in proper relationship with the Lord has at all times "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," ruling in his heart. It was St. Paul who sang praises to God in the prison at Philippi, who was composed and ready to speak to the people after being mobbed at Jerusalem, who was also the composed one in the tempest on the Mediterranean Sea. While St. Paul was indeed a stalwart follower of Jesus, with whom few, if any, could stand comparison, nevertheless the same principle holds with respect to every sincere child of God. If their triumphs of faith are less heroic than those of the Apostle, so also their trials are proportionately less severe. The Christian has much advantage every way. He has the promise of God, not only as respects the life that now is, but also

respects the life to come.

"JESUS SAVIOR PILOT ME OVER LIFE'S TEMPESTUOUS SEA"

"The voyage of life" frequently resembles the one of this study. It may start out with summer suns and every prospect favorable, but, ere long, the trials and difficulties of life sweep down as a storm – financial or social or moral tests come upon the individual to drive him from his intended course. His purposes thwarted, his heart overwhelmed with dismay and almost in despair he finds himself the more ready to hear the message from on high, speaking peace and telling him of a fair haven at last. Nevertheless it can be reached only through the wrecking of the earthen vessel, and Divine providence alone can effect the ultimate salvation. Happy are those who shall ultimately be saved even "through great tribulation," as the companions of God's "peculiar people," represented by St. Paul. (Rev. 7:14.) But still more happy, more blessed will be the 144,000 who now have in the stormy times the fellowship of God and through sore tribulation shall enter the Millennial Kingdom as Joint-Heirs of the Lord. It will be through their instrumentality under God that their companions in the storm of life may ultimately be saved. – Rom. 11:31.

Ah, yes, we do well to heed the exhortation of our Golden Text, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." He shall bring to pass blessings and peace, even in the midst of the storms of life, and he shall bring to pass eventually for these glory, honor and immortality through Christ.

May we not adapt Longfellow's majestic words:

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship the Great!
Sail on, O Church, be strong and wait!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workman wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat,
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!

Fear not each sudden sound and shock;
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale.
In spite of rock and tempest roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee – are all with thee!

THE VOYAGE TO ROME – R. 5960

ACTS 27:13-26

"Commit thy way unto Jehovah; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass."
– Psalm 37:5

NOT LONG after St. Paul's discourse before Festus and King Agrippa, opportunity was afforded for sending the Apostle and other prisoners to Rome under a strong guard. There were no derogatory charges preferred against St. Paul, however. There was no direct intercourse between Rome and the little port of Caesarea; hence for a distance of six hundred miles the journey was made in a small trading vessel.

This journey lasted from about the middle of August to September 1 – good speed for a sailing vessel in those days; but the weather was fine. At Myra, St. Paul and two of the brethren who accompanied him – St. Luke and Aristarchus – were transferred, along with the other prisoners and the guard, to an Egyptian vessel laden with a cargo of wheat and en route for Rome. Besides the crew, this vessel bore a considerable number of passengers – in all, two hundred and seventy-six persons.

For several days the pleasant weather continued, and then it became stormy. The vessel abandoned her intended route in order to get under the lee of the island of Crete, and tarried at the port of Fair Havens for better weather. Thus they were delayed until about October 1, the time for equinoctial storms. St. Paul drew attention to the dangers of continuing the journey, and advised that they winter there. His opinion may have been the result of some inspiration, but quite possibly was merely his own judgment of the weather, etc. He had already had large experience in seeing disasters, as we are informed in one of his Epistles written previous to this time. (2 Corinthians 11:25.) Besides, his trade as a sail-maker would naturally bring him into contact with sailors, and interest him in all matters pertaining to the craft.

But those in authority concluded to go to Phenice, a larger port. Before they had gone far, however, a typhonic northeast wind struck the vessel suddenly; and they were obliged to go with the wind southward and came under the shelter of the little island called Clauda. Here they undergirded the ship by placing chains and ropes under her keel, because the weight of the cargo and the severity of the storm had strained her. Then they lowered the gearing of the sails and continued to drive before the wind, guarding against sand banks. The ship labored heavily in the storm. Part of her cargo was thrown overboard; and later she was further lightened by casting overboard her heavier furniture, tackle, etc.

DAYS OF TRIAL AND DANGER

The storm continued for several days. Neither sun nor stars were visible; and the captain could not tell his whereabouts; for the compass had not yet been invented. Hence all on board were gradually abandoning all hope. They had ceased to eat, and were almost in despair.

During those fourteen days the Apostle had abundant opportunity to fear, to doubt and to question the Lord's providences. Apparently it was not until the night of the thirteenth day of the storm that the Lord sent an angel to St. Paul with the consoling message, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." (Verse 24.) We may safely assume that during those days of testing the Apostle remained heartily loyal in faith toward God, and that this Message at the close was in the nature of an encouragement and an expression of approval.

We may draw a good lesson from this incident, not only in respect to our own affairs in life,

but in a general way to all spiritual testings and trials. The Lord may lead in mysterious ways regarding our temporal matters and our service for Him and His Cause. While He gives us assurances of His love and care and of the ultimate outcome of the narrow way to all who faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus, nevertheless He may meantime permit trials and difficulties of various kinds to come as storms upon us, threatening our very destruction, threatening the overwhelming of our spiritual life, darkening the sky of our hopes with the thunder-clouds of our enemies' threats and with Satan's roarings. Our duty is to let the eye of faith be undimmed by these various terrible conditions – to let our hearts be firmly fixed upon Him who has promised and who will perform.

THOUGHTS BY THE WAY

The expression, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee," is very meaningful. There is no suggestion in these words of "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men," as that false teaching is now advocated by many who are actuated by a noble impulse. On the contrary, the thought is that there was only one man on board that ship who was in personal relationship to God. The others, whatever their natural traits of character, had never come into relationship with God.

There is another thought which may be inferred from the angel's words: The Divine care going with the saints may prove to be a great blessing to their companions, even though, as in this case, these be worldly and unregenerate. This thought is particularly applicable in the earthly families of the people of God. The consecrated parent is the direct object of Divine care; for of the angels it is written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14.) And in the angelic ministrations to these, very frequently – indeed, we may suppose very generally – those of their families who have not come into full relationship with the Lord are to some extent included under the protecting care.

Elsewhere the Apostle points out that in some respects the believing wife has a blessed influence over her husband, or the believing husband a favorable influence over the wife, in regard to their children; else the children would be accounted unholy. (1 Corinthians 7:14.) This is another illustration of the same general lesson that Divine care, although especially for the saints, includes all of their interests of every kind. This does not necessarily imply earthly prosperity, wealth, preservation from accident, shipwreck, etc., as in St. Paul's case; and yet it always means an advantage in some sense and in some degree. Let us take from this thought all the comfort that we can. All things shall work together for good to the Lord's saints (Romans 8:28); and those who are nearest and dearest to them will surely be participants to some extent in their interest and in the Divine care.

ST. PAUL'S MESSAGE OF CHEER

Promptly after having received the assurances of the safety of all on board, the Apostle made the matter known to the ship's company. Then he manifested his own faith in the message by cheerfulness and by breaking his fast, and by advising all the others to do likewise. His spirit was contagious. All were cheered; and doubtless all were impressed not only by the fact to which the Apostle called their attention – that this disaster had resulted from their failure to follow his advice – but also by the evidence of God's special favor toward him respecting the knowledge of their ultimate rescue.

So should it be with the Lord's people. Whatever we know that is good or comforting or refreshing to ourselves we should dispense to others. Had the Apostle kept the good news to himself, it would have implied either that he did not have faith in its fulfilment, or that he was selfish. But having the Lord's spirit of generosity, as well as large trust in the Lord, he did not hesitate to make known the coming

deliverance; and he glorified God in that he did not claim to have this knowledge of himself, but credited it to a revelation.

Evidently the prisoner had produced a deep impression upon many of the soldiers and the sailors. Who can say that at some future time the Apostle's brave, noble conduct may have influenced some of his two hundred and seventy-six companions – possibly eventually drawing some of them to the Lord? So it should be with each of us. We should be prompt to tell to others the best tidings we have. Sympathy with the groaning creation in the various trials of life should lead us to point to the Lord's promises respecting the coming Kingdom of Messiah and the blessings which shall then come to all the families of the earth. Whoever does not thus proclaim daily, on every suitable opportunity, gives evidence either of lack of knowledge or faith in the revelation or else of selfishness, which the Lord cannot approve and which, if persisted in, will ultimately debar him from a share in the Kingdom.

"FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM" – R. 4506

ACTS 27:27; 28:10

"The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." – Psalm 34:22

OUR studies show us St. Paul from various standpoints – a bigoted persecutor; a humble penitent crying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" a courageous witness to the Truth amongst his own people; a self-sacrificing missionary in foreign lands; we have noted his conduct in the presence of mobs and in the presence of kings and nobles; and his courage in the presence of danger while on his voyage as a prisoner to Rome. To-day we view him as a man amongst men in contact with the duties of life and in the midst of a great disaster – a shipwreck. His deportment from the time he became a follower of Jesus was noble, humble, reverential, faithful, devout, saintly: worthy of emulation by all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The transformation wrought in St. Paul is possible in all who have the hearing ear and who receive the Gospel message into good and honest hearts. Such a transformation is of itself a witness to the power of God – to the reality of the religion of the Bible. What a changed world we should be in, if all mankind underwent such transformation! But all are not in condition of heart to be thus influenced, thus "drawn" by the Gospel. Some will need the strong arm of Messiah, will need the authority and force of the Millennial Kingdom to bring them to subjection and to show them the advantages of right over wrong. Thank God that we may pray with faith, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

Fourteen days and nights scudding before a terrific storm brought St. Paul and the ship's company of two hundred and seventy-six souls to where the trained ears of the seamen in the night caught the sounds of the surf, they knew not where. Four anchors were cast out of the stern of the vessel and they waited for morning. St. Paul, the Jew Prisoner, by this time had risen in the estimation of all on board the ship – "For God was with him." Throughout the storm all had lost courage and hope but him, and his was due to his submission to God's will and partly to the fact that in a vision the Lord showed him that he should yet preach the Gospel at Rome and that, for his sake, Divine Providence would care for every life on board the ship. A heart at peace with God and instructed through his

Word is prepared for what may come, of joy or sorrow. The Apostle exhorted his dejected companions to be of good cheer. He reminded them of his vision and assured them of his absolute faith therein. He urged them to take food that they might be strengthened for the strenuous exertions of the coming day. His cheerfulness and example were contagious. As the light of the Lord was his peace and joy, so he in turn was the light of that ship and its comfort. He illustrated what he taught – that God's people should do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith. He exemplified his own words of 2 Corinthians 1:4 – "God comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

With the morning light they discerned the shore and a little bay which now is known as St. Paul's Bay in the Island of Malta, then called Melita. The pilot cut loose from his anchors, hoisted sail and sought to beach the boat; but, before reaching shore, grounded on a mud bank; the forepart holding fast, the rear began to go to pieces with the force of the waves, as it was a meeting place for two sea currents. The life boat had been cut adrift in the night, because the seamen had attempted to desert the ship. St. Paul advised this course, realizing the need of the seamen to bring the boat to land. His confidence in God's promise did not lead him to be slack as respects the proper use of earthly means. There is a lesson here for God's people. While praying and trusting, let us not slack our hands.

Seeing that only by swimming or floating on wreckage could the shore be reached, the soldiers proposed to kill the prisoners because under Roman law they were answerable for their security with their own lives. But the centurion had learned to esteem the Apostle, and for his sake spared all the prisoners, doubtless remembering the vision which had inspired them all with the hope and courage which brought them thus far towards safety. It turned out as St. Paul had foretold, that every human life was spared and the ship alone was lost with her cargo.

On the shore we get a new picture of the Apostle. He stood not on any dignity or assumed superiority to be served, but promptly assisted in serving the interests of the entire company. We find him gathering sticks for a fire, at which the company might be warmed and dried. The barbarians of the Island (so called because they did not speak Greek but Phoenician) showed them various kindnesses. But when they saw a viper, warmed to life by the heat of the fire, fasten itself upon the Apostle's hand, they reasoned that this prisoner was doubtless a murderer who, having escaped the perils of shipwreck, Justice still pursued, and had caused him to be bitten that he might die. They supposed that the arm would swell with the poison from the viper and that soon St. Paul would be writhing in agony and die in torture. But when he shook off the serpent and suffered no injury, they esteemed that he must be a God.

A fresh opportunity here offered for the honoring of the Gospel message, for St. Paul found that the father of the governor was sick and he miraculously healed him and other sick people of the island. Thus was the knowledge of Christ and his minister to a considerable extent shed abroad, although so far as we have any information the Apostle did not attempt to preach the Gospel message, either to his companions on shipboard, or to the people of the island. Evidently he did not consider them to be "good ground" in which to sow the seed of the Kingdom – evidently he did not consider them to be of those whom the Lord our God has called to be of the Bride class now being "called" and tested. Their experiences, doubtless, will prove profitable to them "in due time," when the glorified Christ shall draw all men unto himself – "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), granting them blessed opportunities for knowledge and blessing and restitution. – Acts 3:19-21.

"GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY" – R. 3204

ACTS 27:33-44

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." – Psalm 107:6

NOT long after Paul's discourse before Festus and Agrippa, opportunity offered for sending him a prisoner to Rome, in accordance with his own appeal. He was not sent alone, but in company with other prisoners and under a strong guard. The journey from Caesarea to Rome was by water on merchant vessels, and was probably in the fall of the year, when the storms on the Mediterranean are frequently very severe, sometimes lasting for several days, as in the case mentioned in this lesson. The storm lasted for fourteen days, and was evidently unusually severe. The dangerous season for navigation was reckoned from September 14 to November 14, at which time all navigation in the open sea was suspended for the winter. It is presumed that this storm occurred about September 25.

Doubtless, were we able to look at affairs from God's standpoint, as we will be able to view them by and by, we should see more reason than we now are able to discern why the Apostle's journey to Rome should have been attended with such trying experiences, mental and physical, as were incidental to the shipwreck, wintering on the island of Malta, etc. Possibly the Apostle's faith was being tried; possibly it was being rooted and grounded by these experiences. The Lord had distinctly informed him in a vision that he should go to Rome as his ambassador. He was now on the way, and on several occasions matters looked serious; it seemed as though he would never see the capital of the world; never have the privilege of presenting the truth to the brethren residing there, to whom he had already sent the Epistle to the Romans; never have the opportunity of laboring in their midst, as he had hoped and promised to do.

When in port at Crete a conference was held respecting the wisdom of wintering there or of going on, and the Apostle gave his opinion that it would be unsafe to go on. This may have been the result of some inspiration, but quite possibly was merely the result of his own judgment of the weather, etc. He had already had large experience in seeing disasters, as we are informed in one of his epistles written previous to this time: "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." (2 Cor. 11:25.) Besides, his trade as a sail-maker would naturally bring him in contact with sailors, and interest him in all matters pertaining to the craft. Those in command, however, decided to proceed on the journey, and encountered the disastrous storm of our lesson. During those fourteen days the Apostle had abundant opportunity to fear and doubt and question the Lord's providences, and apparently it was not until the night of the thirteenth day of the storm that the Lord sent an angel to the Apostle, with the consoling message that he should not fear – "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." (Vs. 24.) We may safely assume that the Apostle, during these testing days, remained heartily loyal in faith toward God, and that this message at the close was in the nature of an encouragement and an expression of approval.

We may draw a good lesson from this incident, not only in respect to our own affairs in life, – that the Lord may lead in mysterious ways regarding our temporal matters and our service for him and his cause; – but we may additionally apply the lesson in a general way to all spiritual testings and trials. The Lord gives us, for instance, assurances of his love and care, and of the ultimate outcome of the narrow way to all who faithfully follow in the steps of Jesus; but meantime he may permit trials and difficulties of various kinds to come

as storms upon us, threatening our very destruction, threatening the overwhelming of our spiritual life, darkening the sky of our hopes with the thunderclouds of our enemies' threats and Satan's roarings. Our duty is to let the eye of faith be undimmed by these various terrible conditions, – to let our hearts be firmly fixed upon him who has promised, and who is able also to perform. Thus,

When the storms of life are raging,
Tempests wild on sea and land,
I will seek a place of refuge
In the shadow of God's hand.

Enemies may strive to injure,
Satan all his arts employ;
God will turn what seems to harm me
Into everlasting joy.

The expression, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee," is very meaningful. It reminds us of Abraham's prayer for Sodom – peradventure there were even five righteous persons, God agreed to save the city. There is no suggestion in these words of the "fatherhood of God, and brotherhood of men," as that false teaching is now advocated by many who have a noble impulse. The thought, on the contrary, is that there was only one man on that ship who was in personal relationship to God. The others, whatever their natural traits of character, had never come into personal relationship with the Father. Another thought from the words is that the divine care going with the saints may prove a great blessing to their companions, even though, as in this case, they be worldly and unregenerate. This thought is particularly applicable in the earthly families of God's people. The believing consecrated father or mother is the direct subject of divine care; for of the angels it is written, "They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation," and, in ministering to these, very frequently (indeed, we may suppose generally) those of their families who have not come into full relationship with the Lord are to some extent included under the protecting care. Elsewhere the Apostle points out that in some respects the believing wife has a blessed influence over her husband; or the believing husband a favorable influence over the wife in regard to the children, else the children would be accounted unholy. (1 Cor. 7:14.) This is another illustration of the same general lesson that divine care, though specially for the saints, includes all of their interests of every kind. This does not necessarily imply earthly prosperity, wealth, preservation from accident, shipwreck, etc., as in Paul's case, and yet it does always mean, in some sense and in some degree, an advantage. Let us take from this thought all the comfort we can. All things shall work together for good to the Lord's saints, and those who are nearest and dearest to them will surely be participants to some extent in their interest and in the divine care.

Promptly after receiving the assurances of the safety of all on board, the Apostle made the matter known to the ship's company, and manifested his own faith in the message by cheerfulness and breaking of his fast, and advising all the others to do likewise. His spirit was contagious; they were all cheered, and doubtless they were all impressed not only by the fact to which the Apostle called their attention – namely, that this disaster had come upon them by their failing to follow his advice – but also by the evidence of God's special favor toward him in connection with the knowledge of their ultimate rescue. So it should be with us: whatever we know that is good or comforting or refreshing to ourselves, we should dispense to others. Had the Apostle kept this good news to himself, it would have implied one of two things; either that he did not have faith in its fulfilment, or that he was selfish; but having the Lord's spirit of generosity, as well as large trust in the Lord, he did not hesitate to make known the coming deliverance; and he glorified God in that he did not claim to have this knowledge of himself, but credited it to a revelation. Evidently the prisoner had produced a deep impression upon many of the soldiers and sailors. Who can say that at some future time

the Apostle's brave and noble conduct may not have influenced some of his two hundred and seventy-six companions – possibly eventually drawing some of them to the Lord? So it should be with each of us; we should be prompt to tell to others the best tidings we have; sympathy with the groaning creation in the various trials of life should lead us to point to the Lord's promises respecting the coming Kingdom and the blessings that should then be to all the families of the earth. Whoever does not thus proclaim daily, on every suitable opportunity, gives evidence either of lack of knowledge or of faith in the revelation or of selfishness, which the Lord can not approve, and which, persisted in, will ultimately debar him from a share in the Kingdom.

Another thought properly connected with this lesson is the absence of any suggestion of a revival service being held on board the boat. Neither Paul nor Luke nor Aristarchus are reported to have made the slightest effort, except as their lives were living epistles. It is barely possible that religious services may not have been permitted on the vessel; but, anyway, we know from the Apostle's general course of conduct, that he did his fishing for men amongst rather different classes. As we understand the matter, the seamen of that day were of a coarse and ignorant class. We cannot doubt that the Apostle would have been glad indeed to have served any of his companions had he found in them the hearing ear – according to the Master's words, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." That the sailors were not in a condition to receive or appreciate the gospel is evident from the lesson; because they were selfishly intent upon using the only small boat available for their escape, and premeditated leaving the soldiers and the prisoners on the vessel. We mark the spirit of selfishness as totally unbecoming in anyone begotten of the spirit of God, and contrast it with the spirit of the Apostle, as generous, loving, considerate of others. A similar test shows us that the soldiers in general were not of a class likely to have a hearing ear, because, when perceiving that the vessel would go to pieces, and that thus some prisoners might escape, they counselled their destruction. "The liberal heart deviseth liberal things," and all of the Lord's consecrated people should not only have the noble impulses coming to them because they are the Lord's and because they have tasted of his grace, and been made partakers of his spirit, but, additionally, they should see to it that this spirit prevails in them; that it is manifest in all the affairs of life. They should see to it that they do not crush out the noble impulses which would properly come to them; that, on the contrary, they foster them and encourage them and develop them more and more. Thus we grow in grace as we grow in knowledge, by obedience to the things which we learn.

The centurion alone seems to have profited by the experiences. He alone seems to have read the Apostle's living epistle to any advantage, and upon him it did make an impression, for while he would not have objected so much to the killing of the other prisoners, who probably were seditious characters and worthy of death, he saw no way to make an exception of Paul, and for Paul's sake, therefore, all the prisoners' lives were spared.

Notwithstanding the Apostle's assurance of the Lord that the lives of the entire ship's company were given him, that all would be saved, he realized the propriety of using all proper diligence in cooperation with the promise. Hence, when he discerned the evident intention of the sailors to escape in the small boat, leaving the passengers, unable to guide the vessel, at the mercy of the sea, he communicated the facts to the centurion, pointing out the necessity of compliance with reasonable precautions to insure the fulfilment of the divine promise. So we all should understand that we have something to do in realizing the gracious promises of God to us. In connection with the affairs of this present life he has promised that our bread and water shall be sure, but this does not imply that we shall neglect reasonable opportunities for securing these. He has promised us also a

share in the Kingdom by and by; but it is for us to make our calling and our election sure. God is thoroughly capable and thoroughly willing to perform all of his part in connection with every matter, but it is to our advantage that he calls upon us to show our faith by our works – by our cooperation with him in all reasonable ways. He does not expect us to perform miracles; but he does expect us to do what we are able to do both in respect to present things and eternal matters.

By and by the Apostle's predictions were fulfilled, and the entire ship's company, some by swimming and others by floating on wreckage, reached the land. We notice again that the Apostle did not propose, on reaching land, to have a general revival service; he was not bent on exciting men's minds, but was practising the same gospel methods which the Master taught him; viz., "Let us reason together" – sit down first and count the cost of discipleship, and, if willing to pay the price, "Come, take up thy cross, and follow me." If this, the Lord's method for gathering his people from the world, were still pursued, there would be many fewer nominal Christians; but we believe there would be no smaller number of the genuine ones.

The time for bringing in the world is not yet; hence the Master's words in prayer, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, that they all may be one. . . that [ultimately, 'in due time'] the world may believe." The gathering of the elect class for the Kingdom is under disadvantageous conditions which will thoroughly test them, and make their way so narrow that few will find it, and still fewer make progress in it. When God's time for dealing with the world shall have come, the powers of heaven and of earth will cooperate with the glorified Church in making the gospel so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

So far as the record shows, the Apostle and his companions did no mission work amongst the barbarians of the island on which they were wrecked, nor amongst the soldiers and sailors, their companions during that winter. They left no Church there; – we may safely presume that they found no hearing ears. The lesson to us from this should be that we are not to expect the conversion of the world nor anything akin to it. We are to expect that the Lord will find with the truth a sufficient number to complete the elect Church, and then, with the power and the authority of the Kingdom, establish righteousness and cause the knowledge of himself to fill the earth and bless the whole world through the Church. – Gal. 3:29.

Paul shipwrecked

Striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.
Acts 27:41

SHIPWRECKED ON MELITA – (MALTA) – R. 5966

ACTS 27:38-44

"Jehovah redeemeth the soul of His servants; and none of them that take refuge in Him shall be condemned." – Psalm 34:22 (R.V.)

OUR STUDIES for the current year show us St. Paul from various standpoints – a bigoted persecutor; a humble penitent crying, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me do?"; a courageous witness to the Truth amongst his own people; a self-sacrificing missionary in foreign lands. We have noted his conduct in the presence of kings and nobles. We have admired his courage in the presence of danger while on his voyage to Rome as a prisoner. Today we view him as a man amongst men in contact with the duties of life and in the midst of a great disaster – a shipwreck.

From the time when he became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, St. Paul's deportment was noble, humble, reverential, faithful, devout, saintly, worthy of emulation by all the followers of the Master. The transformation wrought in St. Paul is possible in all who have the hearing ear and who receive the Gospel Message into good and honest hearts. Of itself such a transformation is a witness to the power of God – to the reality of the religion of the Bible. What a changed world we should be in if all mankind underwent such a transformation!

But not all are in the condition of heart to be thus influenced, thus drawn by the Gospel. Some will need the strong arm of Messiah – will need the authority and the force of the Millennial Kingdom – to bring them into subjection and to show them the advantages of right over wrong. Thank God that with faith we may pray, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven"! expecting the realization soon.

ENCOURAGING HIS COMPANIONS

Scudding before the storm of fourteen days and nights, the vessel finally reached a place where the trained ears of the seamen in the night caught the sound of the surf, they knew not where. Then they cast four anchors out of the stern of the vessel, and waited for the morning.

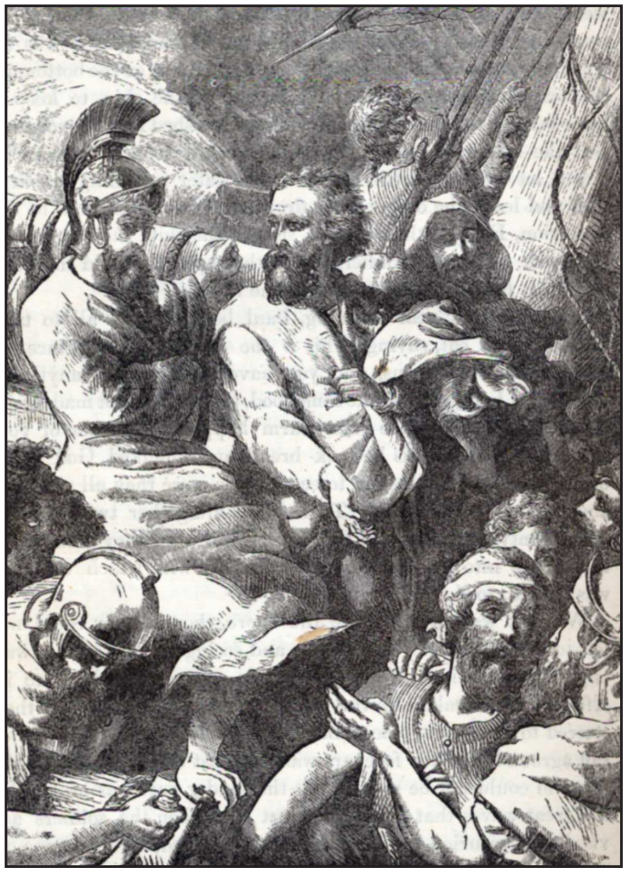
By this time St. Paul, the Jewish prisoner, had risen in the estimation of all on board the ship; for God was with him. Throughout the storm all but the Apostle had lost both courage and hope; and his cheerful attitude was due to his submission to God's will and partly to the fact that in a vision the Lord had showed him that he should yet preach the Gospel at Rome, and that for his sake Divine Providence would care for every life on board the ship. A heart at peace with God and instructed through His Word is prepared for whatever may come of joy or sorrow.

The Apostle exhorted his companions to be of good cheer. He reminded them of his vision, and assured them of his absolute faith therein. Then he urged them to take food in order that they might be strengthened for the strenuous exertions of the coming day. His cheerfulness and his example were contagious. As the light [of the Lord was his peace and joy, so he in turn was the light of the ship and the comfort of those thereon. He illustrated what he taught – that God's people should do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the Household of Faith. He exemplified his own words to the Corinthian Church: "God comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." – Galatians 6:10; 2 Cor. 1:4.

ESCAPING FROM THE WRECK

With the morning light they discerned the

shore and a little bay which is now known as St. Paul's Bay in the Island of Malta, then called Melita. The sailors cut loose from the anchors, hoisted sail and sought to beach the boat. But before reaching shore, the vessel grounded on a mudbank; and the forepart holding fast, the rear began to go to pieces with the force of the waves; for it was a meeting place for two sea currents. In the night the life boat had been cut adrift, because the sailors had attempted to desert the ship. St. Paul had advised this course. Having discerned the evident intention of the sailors to escape in the small boat, he communicated the facts to the centurion, and pointed out the necessity of compliance with reasonable precautions to insure the fulfilment of the Divine promise.



Paul forbids the sailors to leave

So we all should understand that we have something to do in realizing the gracious promises of God to us. In connection with the affairs of this life He has promised that our bread and our water shall be sure. But this does not imply that we shall neglect reasonable opportunities for securing these. He has promised us a share in the coming Messianic Kingdom. But it is for us to make our calling and election sure. God is thoroughly capable and willing to perform all of His part in connection with every matter; but it is to our advantage that He calls upon us to show our faith by our works – by our cooperation with Him in various ways.

Seeing that only by swimming or by floating on wreckage could the shore be reached, the soldiers proposed that the prisoners be killed; for under Roman law they were answerable with their lives for the security of those committed to their charge. But the centurion had learned to esteem the Apostle, and for his sake spared all the prisoners, doubtless remembering the vision which had inspired them all with the hope and the courage which had brought them this far toward safety. It turned out as St. Paul had foretold – that every human life was spared, but that the ship alone was lost with her cargo.

THE APOSTLE FROM A NEW VIEWPOINT

On the shore we get a new picture of St. Paul. He neither stood on any dignity nor assumed superiority to be served. On the contrary, he promptly assisted in serving the interests of the entire company. We find him gathering sticks for a fire, at which the company might be warmed and dried. The barbarians of the island – so-called because they spoke neither Greek nor Latin, but Phoenician – showed them various kindnesses.

But when the natives saw a viper, warmed to life by the heat of the fire, fasten itself upon the Apostle's hand, they reasoned that this prisoner was doubtless a murderer who, having escaped the perils of shipwreck, was still pursued by Divine Justice and bitten in order that he might die. They supposed that St. Paul's arm would swell with the poison from the viper, and that soon the prisoner would be writhing in agony and die in torture. But when he shook off the serpent and suffered no

injury, they concluded that he must be a god.

Here a fresh opportunity was afforded for the honoring of the Gospel Message; for St. Paul soon afterwards found that the father of the governor was sick, and he miraculously healed the man and other sick people of the island. Thus was the knowledge of Christ and His minister spread abroad to a considerable extent, although as far as we have any information the Apostle did not attempt to preach the Gospel Message, either to his companions on shipboard or to the people of the island. Evidently he did not consider them to be "good ground" in which to sow the seed of the Kingdom – did not consider them to be of those whom the Lord our God has called to be of the Bride class now being selected and tested. Doubtless their experiences will prove profitable to them in the due time when the glorified Christ shall draw all men unto Himself (John 12:32), granting them blessed opportunities for knowledge, for blessing and for Restitution. – Acts 3:19-23.

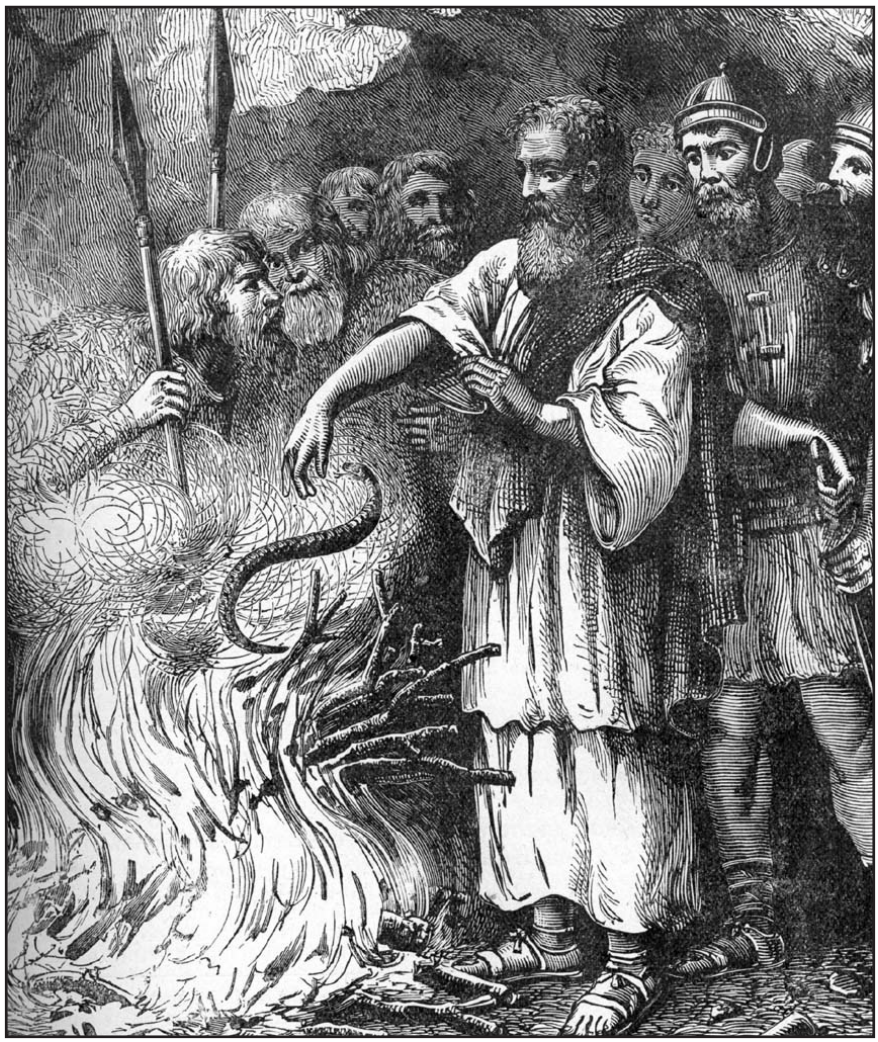
We notice that the Apostle was not bent upon exciting men's minds, but was practising the same Gospel methods which the Master had taught him; namely, of counting the cost of discipleship, and then, if willing to pay the price, of taking up the cross and following the Lord. If this, the Master's method for gathering His people from the world (Matthew 16:24; Luke 14:27-33), were still pursued, there would be many fewer nominal Christians; but we believe that there would be no smaller number of the genuine ones.

The time for bringing the world in is not yet come. Hence the Master prayed not for the world, but for those whom the Father had given Him out of the world. His words were: "I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (John 17:9,20,21.) The gathering of the Elect is under disadvantageous conditions, which will thoroughly test them, making their way so narrow that few will find it, and still fewer progress in it. But when God's due time for dealing with the world shall come, the powers of Heaven and earth will cooperate with the glorified Church in making the Gospel so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. – Isaiah 35:8-10.

As far as the record shows, the Apostle and his companions did no mission work amongst the barbarians of the island on which they were wrecked, nor amongst the soldiers and the sailors who were their companions during that winter. They left no Church there. Therefore we may safely presume that they found no hearing ears. The lesson to us from this fact should be that we are not to expect the conversion of the world nor anything akin to it. But we are to expect that the Lord will find with the Truth a sufficient number to complete the elect Church, and then, with the power and authority of the Kingdom, will establish righteousness and cause the knowledge of Himself to fill the earth and to bless the whole world, through The Christ. – Galatians 3:8,16,29.

When the storms of life are raging,
Tempests wild on sea and land,
I will seek a place of refuge
In the shadow of God's hand.

So, when here the cross I'm bearing,
Meeting storms and billows wild,
Jesus for my soul is caring:
Naught can harm His Father's child.



Paul and the viper

3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.
4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."
5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.
6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

Acts 28:3-6

ST. PAUL PRISONER AT ROME – R. 4507

ACTS 28:11-31

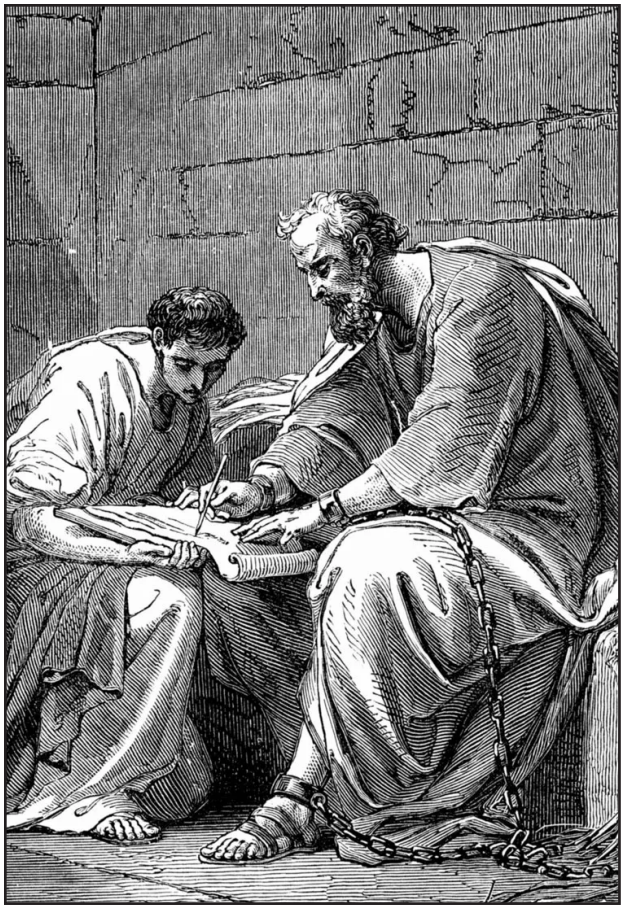
"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." – Romans 1:16

EARLY in the spring A.D. 60 Centurion Julius and his soldiers of the Augustan Band started from Malta with St. Paul and the other prisoners for Rome in another ship, Luke and Aristarchus accompanying. The sea journey was effected without special incident, the landing being made in the Bay of Naples at Puteoli, the seaport of Rome, which is one hundred and fifty miles inland. Here they tarried seven days, the Centurion awaiting orders from Rome respecting the disposal of his prisoners. The delay afforded St. Paul an opportunity to meet with a little band of Christians residing at Puteoli. Doubtless he took the opportunity also to send word to the Christians residing at Rome, whom he repeatedly declared that he longed to meet and whom the Lord promised that he should meet. The journey to Rome, one hundred and eighty miles, was made on foot. En route the Apostle was frequently cheered by evidences of the Christian love of the brethren. Some of these met him at Appii Forum, forty-three miles distant from Rome, and another delegation met him at Three Taverns, thirty miles from the great city.

Many great generals had come this same way with their troops to the imperial city, to receive honors and applause, but few preachers ever had so great honors as were accorded to St. Paul. The journey to and from was for one delegation sixty miles and for the other eighty miles, and the record shows us that the Apostle was by these made acquainted with the true spirit of brotherhood amongst the Christians at Rome. The brethren doubtless came on the journey for their own refreshment and joy, not realizing, perhaps, that the Apostle needed this evidence of their love. Commenting along these lines a gifted writer says, "We often forget that great men are often very lonely and, while we hesitate to say kind words to them, yet words of recognition for what they have done are refreshing to those who receive more criticism than praise. A few days ago an editor showed me a letter he had just received from one who had held nearly the highest position in the gift of the American people, thanking him for his kindly words in a late editorial. My friend said that at first he was astonished that so great a man should care for anything he could say; but on further thought he understood the value of generous appreciation even to the greatest."

"IN HIS OWN HIRED HOUSE"

The fact that there were no charges of an evil character against St. Paul and the further fact that the Centurion who had him in charge during the voyage became his friend were quite sufficient reasons why he should not be treated as an ordinary prisoner, but allowed to live in his own hired house under the care of a soldier to whom he was lightly chained. However, although not permitted to go at liberty, he was permitted to receive his friends and others who called upon him. It is difficult to estimate how much Divine Providence had to do with all these arrangements. Moreover, the soldier on guard was changed every few hours, so that probably he came in close contact with at least six every day, and thus gradually he probably had contact with the entire imperial guard. Thus many were brought in contact with Christian teachings and example. It is claimed that it was through these soldiers that the Gospel message was carried to France, Germany and Great Britain. Truly, "God works in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform!" St. Paul must have had some financial means. It is assumed that ere this he had come into his patrimony. The Scriptures intimate that Felix held him captive at Caesarea in hope of receiving a bribe for his release, evidently



St. Paul in Prison, by Granger

having some intimation respecting St. Paul's finances.

The Lord's servant was not slow in using his God-granted privileges. He knew not when they might be taken away. First of all, of course, he met the Christian brethren; but, as early as the third day after his arrival, he sent for the Jewish leaders and officers of the synagogues, for at this time there were seven synagogues at Rome. He desired to give them information at first-hand respecting why he was there and a prisoner. Secondly, he wished to preach to them the Gospel. He explained that although a prisoner at the instance of the Jews at Palestine, he was not disloyal to his nation or its customs. He had been pronounced innocent at the Roman Court, but had been compelled to appeal to Caesar for his safety; but that even then he was making no accusation against his countrymen. He proposed that gladly he would explain to them the good news, that the long-expected Messiah, in whom the Jewish expectations of his nation rested, had come. The response was that they had received no letters or other communication injurious to the Apostle, and expressed a desire to hear for themselves what St. Paul had to say, because they had heard of this sect and knew that it was spoken against as evil. If he could say anything favorable to it they would hear it.

As our Lord foretold, the darkness which now predominates in the world hates the light and everywhere speaks against it. Vile slanders are still the weapons of the Adversary which the Christian must not handle, because to do so is contrary to the spirit by which he has been regenerated. Even where a truth discreditable to another must be told for any reason it must be spoken in love and, so far as possible, nothing derogatory or injurious must be said. "Speak evil of no man." It is, however, necessary at times to show up the error, the falsity of doctrines presented in the name of Truth; but in so doing, appeals should not be made to bigotry or superstition, but to reason and to the Word of God.

TESTIMONY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

On the appointed day the Jews came to hear the Apostle's message and, from morning until evening, he quoted, explained and expounded, showing from the Law and the prophecies that Jesus is the Messiah and that he is now gathering a Spiritual Seed to be his Kingdom, and that when this Kingdom is complete, it will be glorified in the First Resurrection, and will begin the work allotted to the Seed of Abraham, namely, that of blessing all the families of the earth. The blessing will consist of mental enlightenment and mental, moral and physical uplifting out of sin and death conditions to all that was lost in Adam and redeemed at Calvary. When some of them refused the message, St. Paul sought to further influence them, or at least to influence the believing ones, by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah, showing that God foreknew and

foretold that the majority of Jews would reject the message when it should come to them. As our Lord said of them, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." (Matt. 13:14.) The Apostle does not mean that those who are deaf to the Gospel will be eternally tormented, but still they lose a great blessing, the wonderful privilege of becoming heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ the Redeemer in his Millennial Kingdom. They lose a share with the saints in the glorious work of uplift, which will then be in progress. They lose this privilege because not worthy of it. They were blind to the Truth for this cause. To have permitted the unworthy ones to see, hear and understand the message would have distressed them and added to their responsibilities and possibly hindered, to some extent, the outworking of the Divine purposes.

Some believed St. Paul's message and some did not. It is always thus. The Truth is a searcher and discerner of hearts, and a separator. St. Paul remained for two years under these conditions, preaching the Kingdom of God and how it may be attained at the present time by becoming members of the elect "little flock," the Bride of Christ; how the Kingdom when established during the Millennium will bless the whole earth. He explained how all these things were dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice; that without the redemption which is in Christ Jesus there could be no remission of sins, no everlasting life, no Kingdom class on the spirit plane, but only everlasting destruction. – Acts 3:23.

PAUL AT ROME – R. 1570

ACTS 28:20-31

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." – Romans 1:16

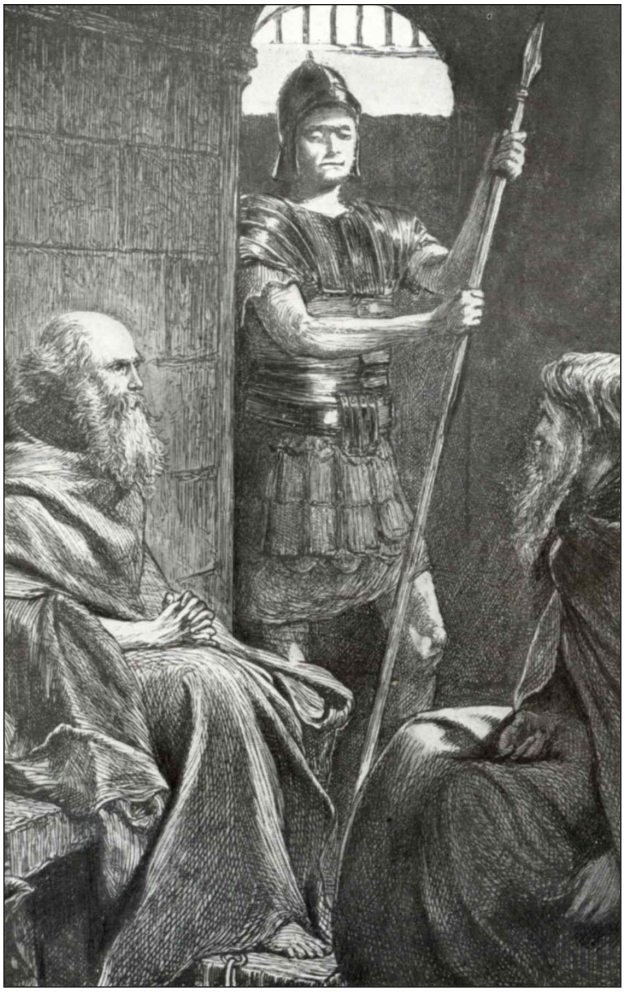
The apparent misfortune which cast the shipwrecked crew upon the little island of Melita became another occasion to the Apostle for bearing effective witness for Christ, and both Paul and all that were with him, and the simple islanders, also, were blessed. (Acts 28:1-10.) Departing thence, other Christians were met, encouraged and blessed – at Puteoli, and possibly at Syracuse and Rhegium; and, nearing Rome, the welcome faces of brethren who had come to meet him were seen at Appii Forum; and Paul thanked God, and took courage. – **Verse 15**.

The Apostle's first step, after his arrival and settlement in Rome, with the large measure of freedom he enjoyed by the favor of the Roman authorities, was to call together the chief of the Jews in Rome, desiring as heretofore to present the gospel "to the Jews first, and afterward to the Gentiles."

In **verse 20** we mark the wisdom manifested in his manner of presenting the subject, declaring and showing that for the hope of Israel he was bearing those chains. And what was the hope of Israel? It was in the promise of a Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom – the very thing that Paul was continually preaching, showing that the promise of his coming had been fulfilled, and that his kingdom would just as surely be established. At the first interview he merely prepared them for a subsequent opportunity to hear the gospel, wisely awakening in them a desire to hear more of his doctrine. Then, at the appointed time, he was ready with all his strong arguments, and spent the day from morning till evening preaching Jesus unto them from the text books of The Law and The Prophets. – **Verse 23**.

It is very noticeable that, though Paul was

careful to present the subject in a manner least calculated to stir up Jewish prejudices, his caution did not keep back the truth. He gave it to them in due time and order, but with all its native force, and let it do its separating work, as it always does. His reasoning was close, Scriptural and cumulative in its power. He reached conclusions, and placed the issue fairly before his hearers; and when they cavilled and rejected the truth he boldly applied to them the rebuke of the Prophet Isaiah (**verses 24-27**), a rebuke which the Lord so frequently applied to Jews. He then declared his subsequent purpose to be, to turn to the Gentiles, who should enjoy the privilege of which they had judged themselves unworthy. (**Verse 28**.) The rebuke of the Prophet was much more weighty to them than any words of his own would have been; for the Jews had not learned to recognize the inspiration of the apostles. From this suggestion we may all learn the wisdom of using the words of inspiration in preference to our own.



St. Paul preaching in prison

Many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.
Acts 28:23

Paul's two years in Rome, awaiting the due processes of the law – the arrival of witnesses from Jerusalem, the formulating of charges, etc., – were years of special advantage to the work of the Lord. Here Paul was for the time safe from his enemies, the Jews, and free, under the protection of his lenient and favorably disposed captors, to preach the gospel to all who would hear, both Jews and Gentiles.

The opportunity was faithfully used. Here he preached the gospel of the Kingdom, and taught the doctrines of Christ with all confidence and freedom; from here he wrote and sent letters to distant Churches; and he prayed for them (Eph. 1:16; 3:14; Phil. 1:4,9), and sent messengers and helpers to them. (Eph. 6:21; Phil. 2:19,25.) The epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and to Philemon were all written from Rome.

We have no definite account of the Apostle's course after his liberation from captivity in Rome, except what may be gleaned from his epistles. The meagre references of history indicate that he afterward went to Spain, and again to Greece and Asia Minor; and that it was a second imprisonment at Rome that terminated in his execution. All evidences concur that he was a wonderful soldier of the cross. He was faithful to the Truth and to the work of the Lord to the end of his course, and left a shining record for our study and imitation.

FROM MALTA TO ROME – R. 5975

ACTS 28:11-24,30,31

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." – Romans 1:16

EARLY in the spring, A.D. 60, Centurion Julius and his soldiers of the Augustan Band started from Malta with St. Paul and the other prisoners for Rome in another ship, Luke and Aristarchus accompanying the Apostle. The voyage was effected without special incident, the landing being made in the Bay of Naples, at Puteoli, the seaport of Rome, which is one hundred and fifty miles inland. Here they tarried for seven days, the centurion awaiting orders from Rome respecting the disposal of his prisoners.

This delay afforded St. Paul an opportunity to meet with a little band of Christians residing at Puteoli. Doubtless he took the opportunity also to send word to the Christians residing at Rome, whom he had repeatedly declared that he longed to meet, and whom the Lord promised that he should meet. The journey to Rome was made on foot. En route the Apostle was frequently cheered by evidences of the Christian love of the brethren. Some of them met him at Appii Forum, forty-three miles distant from Rome; and another delegation met him at Three Taverns, thirty miles from the great city.

Many famous generals had come this same way with [their troops to the imperial city, to receive honors and applause. But few preachers have had so great honors as were accorded to St. Paul. The journey to and from Rome was sixty miles for one delegation and eighty-six miles for the other; and the record shows us that by these manifestations of loving interest the Apostle was made acquainted with the true spirit of brotherhood amongst the Christians at Rome. The brethren doubtless came on the journey for their own refreshment and joy, not realizing, perhaps, that the Apostle needed this evidence of their love.

Commenting along these lines a gifted writer says, "We often forget that great men are often very lonely; and while we hesitate to say kind words to them, yet words of recognition for what they have done are refreshing to those who receive more criticism than praise. A few days ago an editor showed me a letter which he had just received from one who had held nearly the highest position in the gift of the American people, thanking him for his kindly words in a late editorial. My friend said that at first he was astonished that so great a man should care for anything that he could say; but that on further thought he understood the value of generous appreciation even to the greatest and wisest of men."

"IN HIS OWN HIRED HOUSE"

The fact that there were no charges of an evil character against St. Paul, and the further fact that the centurion who had him in charge during the voyage became his friend, were quite sufficient reasons why the Apostle should not be treated as an ordinary prisoner, but permitted to live in his own hired house under the care of a soldier to whom he was lightly chained. Although not permitted to go at liberty, he was allowed, however, to receive his friends and others who called upon him.

It is difficult to estimate how much Divine providence had to do with all these arrangements. Moreover, the soldier on guard was changed every few hours, so that probably the Apostle came into contact with at least six every day. Thus gradually he probably came into close contact with the entire imperial guard, and thus many were made acquainted with Christian teachings and example. It is claimed that through these soldiers the Gospel Message was carried to France, Germany and Great Britain. Truly, "God works in a

mysterious way!"

St. Paul must have had some financial means. It is assumed that ere this he had come into his patrimony. The Scriptures intimate that Felix had held him captive at Caesarea in hope of receiving a bribe for his release, implying some knowledge respecting St. Paul's finances.

PREACHING TO THE JEWS OF ROME

The Lord's servant was not slow in using his God-granted privileges. He knew not when they might be taken away. First of all, of course, he met the Christian brethren. But, as early as the third day after his arrival at Rome, he sent for the Jewish leaders and officers of the synagogue; for at that time there were seven synagogues in the imperial city. He desired to give them information at first-hand respecting why he was there and a prisoner. Then he wished to preach to them the Gospel of Christ.

The Jewish leaders accepted his invitation and visited the Apostle. Doubtless they came readily for several reasons. First, the Jews at Rome had been subject to persecution, which some three years previous had driven Aquila and Priscilla from the city. This persecution had now to some extent abated; but doubtless it had left the hearts of the Jews in a much humbler condition than otherwise they would have been. Second, the Jews doubtless were interested in a fellow countryman in distress, especially one whom they found to be so peculiarly treated by the Roman government – one granted so great liberty as St. Paul enjoyed.

The Lord's providence was certainly in this matter; and the Apostle's peculiar form of restraint was evidently favorable to the cause which he represented. The Jews would certainly beware how they would raise a commotion against one who, although a prisoner, was treated with such consideration, one who was under the direct protection of a soldier, and one for violence to whom they would be directly responsible to Julius, supposed to have been the prefect of the Praetorium – "the captain of the guard."

St. Paul explained to his guests that, although a prisoner at the instance of the Jews of Palestine, he was not disloyal to his nation or to its customs. He had been pronounced innocent at the Roman Court, but had been compelled to appeal to Caesar for his safety. Even then, however, he was making no accusation against his countrymen. He proposed that gladly he would explain to them the good news that the long-expected Messiah had come, in whom the Jewish expectations had rested.

Mark the Apostle's wisdom in handling his subject. He not only showed no unkindness of sentiment toward those who had been the cause of his imprisonment, but he declared to his hearers that he was suffering imprisonment because of his loyalty to Israel and to the hope of Israel. Kindness often begets kindness. The Jewish leaders responded in most considerate terms that they knew nothing against the Apostle, and that they would be pleased to hear his story from his own lips. They admitted, however, that they had some prejudice against the doctrines which he advocated; for they had unfavorable reports concerning Christianity – that "everywhere it is spoken against."

TESTIFYING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

On the day appointed, the Jews came to hear the Apostle's Message. From morning until evening he quoted, explained and expounded, showing from the Law and from the Prophets that Jesus is the Messiah; that He is now gathering a Spiritual Seed of Abraham to be His Kingdom; that when this Kingdom class is complete, it will be glorified in the First Resurrection; and that then will begin the work allotted to the Seed of Abraham – the blessing of all the families of the earth. – Gal. 3:8,16,29.

Doubtless, too, the Apostle gave an account of

the purity of our Lord's life and teachings, and narrated the facts proving His resurrection from the dead. Doubtless he witnessed that the Lord was no longer a man, but a glorious spirit being, whose presence, when seen by St. Paul himself, shone above the brightness of the sun at noonday. Doubtless, also, he pointed out the High Calling of the Church, and explained that this opportunity for becoming Spiritual Israel was accorded first of all to Fleshly Israel; and that the Gentiles, nevertheless, according to the words of the Prophets, would be called in to fill up the elect number which God had predestinated to this glory. Doubtless he showed that the Call involved suffering, sacrifice and self-denial now on the part of those who desired to share in the glories of the Heavenly Kingdom as it will be established at the Second Coming of Messiah and the resurrection of the one true Church. – Rom. 8:28-30,17-19.

When some of his audience refused the Message, St. Paul sought further to influence them, or at least to influence the believing ones, by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah (6:9,10), showing that God had foreknown and had foretold that the majority of the Jews would reject the Message when it should come to them. As our Lord said of them, "Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." The Apostle was not responsible for the effect of the Truth upon his hearers. He earnestly desired to do them good, and used his very best endeavors to present the Truth wisely. The responsibility then lay with the hearers, not with St. Paul, not with the Lord.

The Apostle did not mean that those who are deaf to the Gospel will be eternally tormented; but that they will lose a great blessing – the wonderful privilege of becoming heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ the Redeemer in His Millennial Kingdom. They lose a share with the saints in the glorious work of human uplift, which will then be in progress. They lose this privilege because not worthy of it. For this cause they were blind to the Truth. Had the unworthy ones been permitted to see, hear and understand the Gospel Message, their responsibilities would have been increased, and possibly the outworkings of the Divine purposes would have been to some extent hindered.

WHY THE GOSPEL IS REJECTED

Some of the Jewish leaders believed St. Paul's Message, and some did not. It is always thus. The Truth is a searcher and discerner of the hearts; it is also a separator. It is the Lord's purpose that the Truth shall attract only the one class – the pure in heart, the "Israelites indeed"; and that it shall separate and antagonize those who are not in the right condition of heart, but who are moved even in their religious life by selfishness. Not all are ready for the Present Truth. Some who are noble and generous in many respects have a prejudice of mind or of heart, which hinders them from receiving the Good Tidings. With others it is love of the sect, the party, with which they are identified, and whose teachings must be more or less antagonistic to the Truth because of the error they contain. With still others it is the fear of man, which bringeth a snare – the fear of unpopularity, and the realization that faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ would mean self-sacrifice, the giving up of the will.

Now, as then, the Lord is using just such testings to separate the wheat from the tares, the gold from the dross. We cannot expect that He will do otherwise. Therefore our prayers and our endeavors must be in the direction of thorough honesty with the Lord, with the brethren, and with His Truth – the love of the Truth being above all things else. The Lord's declaration respecting the class that will fall during this time of testing is that He will send them strong delusion, that they will believe the lie, because they received not the Truth in the love of it. – 2 Thessalonians 2:10,11.

For nearly two years St. Paul remained under these conditions, preaching the Kingdom of

God, and explaining how it may be attained at the present time by becoming members of the Elect Little Flock, the Bride of Christ, and how the Kingdom, when established, will during the Millennium bless the whole earth. He taught that all these things were dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice; that without the redemption which is in Christ Jesus there could be no remission of sins, no everlasting life, no Kingdom class upon the spirit plane, but only everlasting destruction. – Acts 3:23.

Here the narrative of St. Paul's work ends. Tradition tells us that at the end of two years he was liberated; that again he visited the churches of Asia Minor and subsequently went to Spain; that, later on, he came back to Rome as a prisoner without favor; and that after spending a considerable time in the Mamertine prison, a dread dungeon, he finally suffered martyrdom. Tradition also says that his Roman citizenship saved him from crucifixion; and that instead he was decapitated. St. Paul's Cathedral at Rome is said to have been built near the place of his execution.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AT ROME – R. 3208

ACTS 28:16-24,30,31

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." – Romans 1:16

DOUBTLESS the favorable impression made by the Apostle Paul upon the centurion who brought him prisoner to Rome – the evidence which the latter had on the journey, in the storm, in the shipwreck, and subsequently during the stay at Malta – combined with the favorable letter sent by Festus to Caesar explaining that the charges against the Apostle were evidently the results of religious hatred, etc., secured for him very different treatment from that usually accorded to prisoners sent to Rome. He was treated as a prisoner to the extent that he was continually chained to a guard, a Roman soldier, responsible for his appearance whenever demanded. These guards were changed every few hours, so that, on the whole, probably a considerable number of the garrison had personal contact with the Apostle, knew his manner of living most intimately, and many of them must have heard his teaching and preaching to the numbers of Jews and Christians who visited him. It is surmised, – not without grounds, we think, – that some of these soldiers, who were subsequently sent to Great Britain, carried the gospel thither. Certain it was that the Apostle's life was a living epistle which cannot have been without its effect, either for the blessing or the hardening of those with whom he came in contact – to some a savor of life unto life; to others a savor of death unto death – according as they received or rejected the knowledge and light. The same should be true of all the Lord's followers to the extent of their abilities and opportunities; each should let his light so shine as to glorify the Father. Business acquaintances, social friends, neighbors, relatives, – all should know exactly where we stand on all questions of righteousness, as well as what is the foundation for our faith and hopes.

We are informed that Paul dwelt in his own hired house – more properly apartments, not necessarily an entire building. The expenses of maintaining such a residence, where numbers of people could be invited, must have been considerable, and evidently the Apostle did not here continue his trade of tent-making. It is possible that his necessities were supplied by his friends at Rome and elsewhere: it is possible also that by this time, in the Lord's providence, he had inherited a considerable patrimony from his father's estate. The lesson

in this particular is that God is able to supply all of our real needs in one way or another. It is for us to do with our might what our hands find to do, using our time and strength and talents in the Lord's service to the best of our judgment, and leaving all arrangements as well as results in his hand. No doubt it was to the Apostle's advantage that for a time he was left in penury and found it necessary to labor, working with his hands for life's necessities while he was preaching the good tidings. Thus he demonstrated his loyalty to the Lord, to the truth, to the brethren, to principle; and thus he set us an example along these lines which, doubtless, has since been profitable to many of the Lord's followers.

Paul had a considerable number of kinsmen and acquaintances in Rome, the number of whom we know was at least over thirty-two according to the salutations of his epistle written to them previously at Corinth. (Rom. 16:1-15.) Doubtless these were informed of the Apostle's arrival and visited him speedily. But our lesson calls our attention particularly to the Apostle's energy in seeking to be about the Master's business, – seeking to make known the good tidings to those who as yet had not heard it. Three days after his arrival in Rome he sent forth an invitation requesting the leading Jews there to visit him. We can learn a good lesson from this in harmony with the Apostle's words, "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Our chief business, like his, should be the Lord's service; the comfortable fixing of our abode and our fellowship with our friends and relatives should not occupy the most important part of our time. We should remember the Apostle's words, "This one thing I do"; and applying them to ourselves we should be "instant [unceasingly] in season and out of season [when convenient and when inconvenient to ourselves]" in our service of our Lord and his cause.

The Jews accepted the invitation and visited the Apostle: doubtless they came readily for several reasons. First, all the Jews residing in Rome had been subject to persecution, which had some three years previously driven Aquila and Priscilla from the city. This persecution had now to some extent abated, but doubtless it had left the hearts of the Jews in a much humbler condition than they would otherwise have been. Persecutions certainly have their value to the Lord's people; they help to make us tender-hearted, compassionate and sympathetic with others, as well as help to polish and develop us in Christian character. Secondly, the Jews were, doubtless, interested in a fellow-countryman in distress, and specially interested in one whom they found to be so peculiarly treated by the Roman government – one granted so great liberty as Paul enjoyed. The Lord's providence was certainly in this matter, and the Apostle's peculiar form of restraint was evidently favorable to the cause he represented. The Jews would certainly beware how they would raise a commotion against one who, though a prisoner, was treated with such consideration, and one who was under the direct protection of a soldier, and for violence to whom they would be directly responsible to Julius, who is supposed to have been the perfect of the Praetorium, or "captain of the guard," of that time – a man of good repute. It was while a prisoner in his own house that the Apostle found favorable opportunity for writing several of his epistles – to the Philippians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians. Doubtless the two years spent in prison in Caesarea were valuable to the Apostle himself, as giving him more abundant opportunity for further study of the divine plan than he could have enjoyed while engaged continually in the mission work. Now this added experience and grasp of the gospel found their expression in the epistles referred to, and were communicated to the Church at Rome. We should remember, too, that Rome was the very center of influence at that time, that from its influences radiated in every direction. Thus we see the Lord's guidance in the Apostle's affairs, and applying the lesson to ourselves it impresses upon us his assurance that "all things shall work together

for good to those who love God, to the called ones according to his purpose." Consoled with this promise we can endure trials and disappointments, even though at the time we cannot see how such experiences will ever work good. Thus we learn that

Faith can firmly trust him,
Come what may.

To the chief Jews who visited him the Apostle explained briefly the cause of the opposition of the Jews, the necessity of his appeal to Caesar and the assurance that he had naught whereof to accuse his own nation. His nobility of character is prominently before us at every turn of his affairs. How many less noble minds would have felt embittered against their own nation! How many would have charged the rulers of it in immoderate terms for their injustice, hypocrisy, etc.! We love the Apostle all the more because we discern in his course the true, noble, Christian spirit and principle. Let us seek to emulate his example, not only in respect to what we shall say of earthly laws and rulers, but let us also apply the same rule to all who seek to do us injury; let us not render evil for evil and railing for railing, but let us remember how it is written of our Lord that "when he was reviled he reviled not again."

Mark the wisdom of the Apostle in handling his subject: He not only showed no unkindness of sentiment toward those who had been the cause of his imprisonment, but he declared to his hearers that he was bearing his bondage because of the hope of Israel. He was not seeking for their sympathy; he was seeking to turn their hearts to the Lord. Hence, as soon as possible in his narrative he directed their attention to this central fact, that Israel had a hope, and that it was because of his loyalty to Israel and Israel's hope that he was suffering imprisonment.

Kindness often begets kindness (though not always), and the Jews responded in most considerate terms that they knew nothing against the Apostle and that they would be pleased to hear his story from his own lips. They admitted, however, that they had some prejudice against the doctrines he advocated because they had heard unfavorable reports concerning Christianity – that "everywhere it is spoken against."

The nearer we approach to the truth the more likely we are to find numerous enemies. Good men and bad men may have both friends and enemies, but it is reserved to the pure gospel and those who uphold it to be ***everywhere*** spoken against – to have few zealous friends outside its own little consecrated band; but it will not always be so. It is so now because we are still living in an epoch known spiritually as "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4), and because Satan is the god of this world, who now worketh in the children of disobedience, blinding their eyes to the truth and constraining them to hate the light and oppose it. By and by Satan will be bound, and his deluded subjects will have the eyes of their understanding opened (Isa. 35:5; Rev. 20:1): "then shall ye return" – turn about – see things from the divine standpoint, and discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not – discern a marked difference from the present time – that evil doers will suffer, and that those who do the will of the Lord will be greatly blessed and no longer be everywhere spoken against.

The Apostle did not attempt to preach the gospel at this first interview, but simply introduced himself and his message and made an appointment for a future meeting, at which, according to the Greek text, a great number gathered, to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the Kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus – from morning until evening. We can imagine the substance of this long discourse: it evidently was along the same lines as our Lord's words to the two with whom he went to Emmaus after his resurrection, when he opened unto them the Scriptures – showing the types of the Law, the necessity for an antitypical sin-offering and the necessity for an antitypical Prophet, Priest and King; the predictions of

the Prophets concerning these things; the words of David, of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of Zechariah, Joel, etc., etc. Doubtless, too, the Apostle gave an account of the purity of our Lord's life and teachings, and narrated the facts proving his resurrection, and his own witness that the Lord was no longer a man, but a glorious being, whose presence when seen by the Apostle shone above the brightness of the sun at noonday. Doubtless, too, he pointed out the high calling of the Church, and that this opportunity for becoming spiritual Israel was accorded first of all to fleshly Israel; and that the Gentiles, nevertheless, according to the words of the prophets, would be called in to fill up, to complete the elect number that God had predestinated to this glory. Doubtless he showed that the call involved suffering, sacrifice and self-denial now on the part of those who would share in the glories of the heavenly Kingdom as it will be established at the second coming of Messiah, and the resurrection of the Church, which is his body.

As is always the case, the truth proved a separator, and we are not surprised to find that among those who were interested enough, and curious enough, to desire to hear the Apostle, some believed and some disbelieved. The truth in the harvest time of this age has a similar effect: it is a sickle which both gathers the wheat to the garner and separates the tares. Paul was not responsible for the effect of the truth upon his hearers. He earnestly desired to do them good, and used his very best endeavors to present the truth wisely, but the responsibility lay then with the hearers, not with Paul, nor with the Lord. It is the Lord's intention that the truth shall attract only the one class – the pure in heart, the Israelites indeed – and that it should separate and antagonize those who are not in the right condition of heart, but are moved even in their religious devotions by selfishness. So we find matters today; not all are ready for the present truth. Some who are noble and generous in many respects have a prejudice of mind, or heart, which hinders them from being able to receive the good tidings. With some it is love of the sect, or party, with which they are identified, and whose teachings must be more or less antagonistic to the truth because of the error they contain; with others the difficulty is the fear of man, which bringeth a snare – the fear of greater unpopularity and the realization that faithfulness to the Gospel of Christ would mean self-sacrifice. The Lord is using just such testings now as then to separate the wheat from the tares, the gold from the dross. We can not expect that he will do otherwise for us or for any, and our prayers and endeavors must be in the direction of thorough honesty with the Lord, with the brethren and with his truth – the love of the truth being above all things else. The Lord's declaration respecting the class that will fall in this time of testing is that he will send them strong delusion, that they will believe a lie, because they received not the truth in the love of it. – 2 Thess. 2:10,11.

The good work thus promptly and thoroughly begun, we doubt not, was continued by the Apostle with fervency during the remainder of the two years he was a prisoner. He was not privileged to go out and make public discourses in Rome, for at that time the Emperor was not only the head of everything social and political, but also the ecclesiastical head of the world, and any new religion would be under special restraint in Rome, the seat of the imperial government. Hence, in all probability Paul's condition as a prisoner – *at liberty to receive all who would come to him* – was the best not only for him, but for the cause he represented. We are reminded here that some are kept prisoners at home by family duties, or illness, or other bonds of obligation or necessity, and that where such conditions prevail the Lord's people should both pray and expect that the Lord would bring to them such as might be benefitted by their ministries of the truth. Let us each be zealous to use our opportunities, whether our advantages be great or small, and let us rely upon it that the Lord knows our condition and is able to change it according to his good pleasure and wisdom. Under the existing conditions, no one was able to forbid

the Apostle, or to restrain him, from speaking with the utmost confidence and boldness the truths pertaining to the Lord Jesus and the Kingdom of God which he would establish at his second advent – the present Gospel age being for the selection and polishing and testing of those who will be joint-heirs with him in that Kingdom. Let us be faithful and let us see to it that our ministries, both public and private, be along these lines – that we do not permit any other gospel to take the place of this one which the Lord has committed to us. We note incidentally that we are living in a day of many gospels – the gospel of socialism, the gospel of health by proper living, the gospel of faith cures, mind cures, hypnotic cures, etc.; the gospel of various sciences; the gospel of the power of the will, etc., etc. Whatever their advocates may say about these gospels, let us remember that none of these is the gospel which the Lord and his apostles committed to us; let us inquire for the old paths and let us keep them faithfully until by and by we shall hear the Master's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." Then we shall know as we are known; then we shall understand much better than the various theories of the present time could possibly instruct us. If we win the great prize it must be, in any event, at the cost of our present earthly lives; and, hence, the gospel of health is in some respects in direct antagonism to the gospel of sacrifice which we preach. By this we do not mean that the Lord's people should be negligent of health; but we do mean that it should in their estimation be so secondary to the gospel of God's dear Son and the glory to be attained through him and through association in his sacrifice, that earthly life and earthly health and earthly physical development should be loss and dross in comparison.

Here the narrative of the Apostle's work ends. Tradition tells us that the Apostle was liberated at the end of the two years; that he again visited the churches of Asia Minor and, subsequently, made a visit to Spain, preaching the gospel; and that later on he came to Rome again a prisoner without favor, and that he suffered martyrdom after spending a considerable time imprisoned in the Mamertine prison, a dread dungeon in Rome. Tradition says that his Roman citizenship saved him from crucifixion, and that he was, instead, decapitated. St. Paul's Cathedral at Rome is said to have been built near the site of his execution.

It was probably during this latter imprisonment that the Apostle wrote his epistles to Timothy and Titus, in one of which (2 Tim. 4:7,8) he declares,

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearing."

As we note the noble character of this dear brother in the Lord, we all desire to emulate it and thus to be copies of the Lord Jesus. And now we have approached, we believe, close to the termination of the narrow way, close to the time when we hope to hear the Master's "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Let us, therefore, be encouraged the more to buckle on tightly the armor, and to fight the good fight faithfully to the close, that we may with the Apostle share the crown of rejoicing which the Lord has promised to all who love him supremely – even unto death.

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