

WRITINGS OF R C BELL

by R.C. Bell

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by R.C. Bell, compiled for study and devotional reading.

110 Chapters

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Questions

01.01. ESSAY NO. 1

ESSAY NO. 1

After Jerusalem first and Antioch second, Ephesus became the third center of Christianity. Read Acts 19:1-41, which is the best account, probably, of Satan's resistance (superhuman from beneath) to Christ's invasion (superhuman from above) of his usurped earthly domain, to learn about the founding of the church in Ephesus; next, read Paul's address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-35), a few years later, with its prophetic warning of danger to the church from without and from within after his death, and its tearful appeal to them "to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood"; then, read Christ's own letter to Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) some third of a century after the church was planted, in which he is already grieved because despite their loyalty to doctrine, their good works, and their hatred of evil, their personal love for him was waned. His faithful warning that unless they repent of this insidious sin of ingratitude (which was to beset his church till he comes again), they will cease to be his church at all is cause for deep searching of motive by all who would be genuine Christians. These readings are good preparation for the study of Ephesians.

Salutation The salutation comprising the first two verses, as if to make things doubly sure if possible, contains four sets of doubles. "An apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God" names God and Christ as the double source of authority; in "to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus" is found a duplicate designation for Christians; "grace to you and peace" is double, colossal blessing; and "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" names the double source of this twofold blessing. The salutation, being especially full and rich even for Paul, is in keeping with the marvelous reach, comprehensiveness, and "unsearchable riches" of the entire book.

The Calling of the Church The second paragraph of Ephesians is one long, massive sentence on the subject of God's redeeming grace. It teaches that God in eternity, before he made the world and time, purposed "in the fullness of the times" to demonstrate his grace through his Son. It seems that God brought time, spanning the interval between eternity past and eternity future, into existence for a theater in which to work out his grace. The drama of God's grace is not limited to earth. Inasmuch as discord and rebellion began with angels in heaven and later spread to earth, God's purpose is to restore harmony in both heaven and earth before time ends. Does not "To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians 1:10) involve this? Certainly, it is God's eternal purpose through Christ "to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heaven" (Colossians 1:20). Therefore, when Christ overcomes all angelic and human hostility, and when universal peace is restored in heaven and on earth, time with Christ's remedial kingdom having served its purpose may end. Then eternity may go on again as it was before time began. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God . . . that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Everything pertaining to the church lay in the mind of God “before the foundation of the world” as an unborn forest lies in the cup of an acorn. Nothing was left to chance. What long, large thoughts here, mind-stretching and heart-captivating! And is it not thrilling to know that God depends on his grace to “create a soul under the ribs of death” and to attain such glorious ends? Christianity has intellectual and emotional “length and height and depth” humanly inscrutable. No wonder Paul exalts, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

01.02. ESSAY NO. 2

ESSAY NO. 2

Paul's magnificent anthem on God's grace (Ephesians 1:3-14) shows that God exercises his grace in a three-tense program; namely, past purpose, present workings, and future consummation. This mighty song begins in the vast eternity past with God's purpose, proceeds with his purpose throughout time, and enters eternity future with it brought to fruition. No other sentence in all the Bible involves more time, digs more deeply about the very roots of Christianity, or reveals more of the riches of God's wisdom and grace. It sets forth Christianity as the masterpiece of God's combined power, "wisdom and prudence," and goodness. The sentence may be thought of as the first chapter of Paul's spiritual Genesis. The Doctrine of Predestination The Bible teaches that God before he created Adam knew that he would sin. Some say that God's foreknowledge deprived Adam of a choice, and therefore he was not responsible for his disobedience. But the Bible teaches that despite God's foreknowing man's sin, man is a responsible, guilty sinner when he disobeys God. Peter on Pentecost, although Christ was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23) convicted the Jews of crime in crucifying him. Neither Peter nor his hearers saw any inconsistency between God's foreknowledge and man's responsibility for his deeds. Foreknowledge is not causation. A farmer's foreknowledge that the wheat he sows will become bread, is not the cause of the bread. The doctrine that divine foreknowledge and human responsibility are consistent, cardinal truths so permeates the Bible throughout that to deny it, is to deny the Bible. Without it, God and man and Bible, as they are, would cease to be. A Fallacious Difficulty Examined

If the relationship between God's will and man's will, involves intellectual difficulties, what of it? A man who thinks that what is above his reason is of necessity unreasonable is ignorant, proud, and foolish. "Upon what meat doth this Caesar feed, that he has grown so great" as to think he can revise God? Were he consistent, he would not eat bread until he knows all the mystery back of producing bread and of its becoming part of his body. A man who eats bread, mystery and all, should likewise believe, mystery and all, the revealed truth that God's foreknowledge and man's freedom of will are compatible doctrines. Holy men of God, knowing that omniscience and prescience are essential attributes of deity, even when God goes beyond their understanding, still believe and trust him. Things are not necessarily unreasonable because they transcend human reason. Mystery does not rob them of their merit and utility. Mark Twain said that, not the things in the Bible which he did not understand, but the things which he did understand were what bothered him.

Predestination Explained This scripture in Ephesians says that God "fore-ordained" before he made the world. But foreordained what? Not that he would arbitrarily save some men and condemn other men, but that according to his prevision he would make provision to save all men by faith in Christ. Christ was "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) as the Savior of men. It was also foreordained that men in the process of being saved by Christ

should become like him. “Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). This shows that “the elect” are men who by faith will to elect God’s Christ as their Savior, and the “non-elect” are faithless men who will not to do so. Thus, the great Biblical doctrine of foreordination and predestination is stripped of all divine partiality and all fatalism that have through the centuries grown up around it. The simple truth, practical and practicable and adequate, is that God before time foreknew that sin would invade man’s world, and that he already had his mind made up as to how he would deal with it. Tennyson, wrestling with this matter, humbly wrote:

“Our wills are ours, we know not how; Our wills are ours, to make them thine (Christ’s)”

01.03. ESSAY NO. 3

ESSAY NO. 3

“. . .having foreordained us unto adoption of sons through Jesus Christ . . .which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood . . . according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:5-7). In these words Paul makes the transition from God’s grace in purpose, which is the past tense in his three-tense program of redeeming grace, to his grace in bestowment which is the present tense. This present tense, the Christian Dispensation, spans the time between the inauguration of Christ’s remedial kingdom on Pentecost and its “end when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God.”

Present Bestowment From all eternity God foreknew that, after man was created, he would by sin break fellowship with him. He also knew that man by unaided efforts could never restore this fellowship—that the chasm between them could never be bridged from the earthly side. Consequently when Adam sinned, God promised him a kinsman bridge-builder from the heavenly side. In this prophecy God began to make known the manner in which his timeless purpose to redeem man was to be executed. From this fountainhead of prophecy, revealing that the Redeemer was to be the woman’s seed (Genesis 3:15), an ever-increasing stream of prophecies and types flowed. In due time God disclosed that the kinsman Deliverer was to be a child begotten by the Holy Spirit and brought forth of a human, virgin mother, thus fusing God and man in one person (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35). In “the fullness of the times,” when God’s clock struck the hour set before time began, the God-man, the kinsman Mediator, “himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:5) came to earth, according to God’s endlessly unfolding purpose.

Apparently Adam understood this prophecy, for after receiving it, he “called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living (life)” (Genesis 3:20). Most of his posterity, however, have never believed that Christ, the seed of the woman, is man’s only hope, and that “in none other is there salvation.” Instead, they have built their religions on the constitutionally fatal error that sinners can and must do meritorious work to win the favor of an offended god, whereas Christianity begins with God’s doing gracious work to win the favor of helpless sinners. God freely bestows his redemptive grace on dead men, because he actually loves them with a deep, tender, motherly yearning and really rejoices when they accept his eternal program and become fitted for its future glories.

Future Consummation In the last three verses of this marvelous sentence, Paul makes the transition in God’s program from present bestowment to future consummation. By mentioning the pre-Christian distinction between Jew and Gentile, he makes their being “one new man” in Christ, sealed “with the Holy Spirit of promise” strikingly effective. Observe the correlative workings of the Trinity: God’s eternal counsel and election made operative in the blood of Christ, and the finished transaction stamped and sealed by the Holy Spirit. In another setting some ten years earlier, Paul, without elaboration, stated the great doctrines of this remarkable sentence: “God chose you from

the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The electrifying truth that "every spiritual blessing" we Christians now enjoy is but "an earnest (foretaste and pledge) of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession" is an ever-springing fountain of hope, courage, and joy to Christian pilgrims on their wayfaring way through a world ruled over by the enemy unto their home "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Of course, a risen, deathless body is included . in the redemption of God's people. As sin ruined the whole triune man, body and soul and spirit, so God's redemption must restore the whole man. Saints, "spirit and soul and body," are to be preserved entire (1 Thessalonians 5:23), "Unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

01.04. ESSAY NO. 4

ESSAY NO. 4

Paul had no sooner ended his great sentence about the wonders of God's grace than he began a new one almost as long (Ephesians 1:15-23), dealing with human response to grace. With good psychology, Paul, after graciously commending the Ephesians for their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints (essential marks of all Christians), told them of his thanks to God for them and of his ceaseless prayers on their behalf.

Prayer

Paul was a man of prayer. He believed that when God created the universe with all of its marvelous interplay of physical and moral forces, he provided for prayer. Divine energies are released, and channels through which God may act are opened by it; instead of working separately it blends with and works with other forces. Paul knew the mind and method of God too well to be mistaken about prayers. The fact that he, a man of exceptional mental and moral powers, prayed so much is proof that prayer "availeth much in its working." If prayer does not work, what is to be thought of Paul? Sensible, honest men just do not continue to fish a lifetime in water that contains no fish. God designed his world to operate in conjunction with human cooperation. He fuses both the prayers and the deeds of men into the final order of running his whole creation.

Consequently, prayer is not a miraculous or magical substitute for human effort. Paul, Moses, and all other men who pray most work most too. Men who believe the Bible have no doubts, despite mysteries on the human level, about the reality of prayer. When men realize that God can use laws with which they are acquainted, as he used the law of gravity for untold ages before men dreamed of its existence, they pray in faith and learn by experience that prayer works. And is not this enough? Is there a man so foolish as to refuse the benefits of an intricate machine that works because he cannot see how it works?

Paul's General Prayer That God "may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (Christ); having the eyes of your heart enlightened . . . (Ephesians 1:17-18). In this prayer Paul is not talking about the special miraculous knowledge of his day, but about the general spiritual understanding and discernment by which Christians still know Christ to be a real, living person. This intimate, personal acquaintance with Christ himself, which leads into perpetually increasing knowledge, appreciation, and appropriation of him as the very bread and light of life, so that studying the Bible and living the Christian life result in his becoming more and more a wise, practical revelation, is what Paul means by "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." It is a very different thing, not only from the miraculous gifts of the first century, but also from the prevalent academic knowledge about the Bible and Christ of the twentieth century.

Before a man can acquire this knowledge, the eyes of his heart must be enlightened. Since what the heart “sees” is the urge and ground swell of human activity, what a man loves, more than what he thinks, enters into his making. Christ gives the place of dominant, central power in his kingdom of love, “the vitamin of the soul.” Honest study of the Bible, confiding prayer, intimate communion with God, and, growing out of the moral sympathy and spiritual affinity between Christ and Christians, the rich, energizing emotional experience of being fused with Christ into an organism, animated by his Spirit and instinct with his life is, in Paul’s sense, “the knowledge of him.”

Paul’s Specific Prayer

Paul prays that the Ephesians may know, first, “What is the hope of his calling”; second, “What the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”; third, “What the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Ephesians 1:18-19). This is Paul’s prayer of the three “whats.”

Because there is no more bracing tonic for the human will than hope, Paul prays that they may consider the substance and worth of their Christian hope, which is to be consummated when they “shall see his face” in eternity. If they but see the contrasting emptiness and hopelessness of life without “Christ . . . the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), they can never, thinks Paul, go back to the Christ-less life.

Leaving the saint’s inheritance in Christ, the prayer moves on to the second “what,” God’s inheritance in the saints. The truth that God has in his church “a people for his own possession,” “a heritage,” which he purchased at a piteous cost, and which is as precious to him as a goodly pearl of great price, should touch a Christian to the heart, the area in which Christianity works, primarily, and bring to his lips the questions: “What returns is God receiving on his investment in me? The eyes of my heart seeing that in his saints, evermore than in suns and stars, he has a medium through which to manifest his wisdom and goodness, how can I, who profess to be loyal to him and jealous of his honor, ever be false and grieve his great heart by disgracing his church?” With such masterly instruction and exhortation, Paul hopes to wed each Christian to Christ forever. The Christian standard is so high that some decline the endeavor to be Christians. Others, trying and failing so often, become discouraged and quit. The third “what” of Paul’s prayer deals with this situation at some length. Men in Christ have access to God’s invincible power and need not suffer defeat and despair. The same “exceeding greatness of power” that raised Christ from the dead, enthroned him in heaven far above every other name, and “gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body,” resides in and empowers every member in his body. Men who abide in Christ cannot be defeated unless Christ is. In another connection, Paul distills these verses into, “The Lord hath power to make him stand” (Romans 14:4). Paul, personally, out of much experience with God’s power, witnesses: “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me” (Php 4:13). And behold, what a powerful, vital man God’s power made of him!

01.05. ESSAY NO. 5

ESSAY NO. 5

Ephesians 1:1-23 closes with God's having executed his eternal purpose as far as the calling of his church into existence. The second chapter deals with the material he built into his church, and with its construction.

"The Prince of This World" In Eden, Satan hatched a successful rebellion to obtain the earth, as a revolted province from God, for his own domain. This chapter broadly gives man's state after millenniums under Satan's reign. He is "the prince" of all men who walk "according to the course of this world," for he is "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2) to motivate and direct them. Twice, Christ calls him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; John 14:30); Paul calls him "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). The majority of men are still "sons of disobedience," and unknown to themselves, tools of Satan. Modern civilization with its scientific-humanism and disposition more and more to discard God as being no longer needed is, in Paul's sense, "this world." Men who repudiate "this world" to accept Christ as Lord constitute the church. Humanity breaks down into these dichotomous groups—the church and the world. That saints may realize the depths from which they have been lifted and the incompatibility of these groups, Paul paints in this chapter an appalling picture of the devil-dominated world. Ephesians has been called, "The alps of the Bible." It does contain a long, lofty mountain range of God's grace, but it also contains a vast deep of Satan's malice.

According to the Bible, Satan is an actual person with superhuman powers and resources, who works underground, achieves great success, and really challenges God. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19); that is, in, "The devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). He is not a discredited legend from an unenlightened past or a modern symbol. He is no myth or clown, but a discreative, mighty adversary to God and a most perilous foe to man. Satan is a bold, unflinching pretender, who even dared the attempt to win over to his side, as he did Eve, Christ, the rightful owner of the earth. Probably, only God himself knows more and does more than Satan knows and does. The modern, mellow, jocular unconcern toward him pleases him, but it is anti-Christian. "Be . . . the devil . . . walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Judaism and Paganism are Failures Being Jew or Gentile is beside the question of condemnation. "We (Jews) were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (Gentiles)" (Ephesians 2:3). "But God, being rich in mercy . . . even when we were dead, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5). The emphasis Paul puts on God's mercy and grace in human salvation makes sense in relation to the havoc wrought by Satan in man's personality. Human nature is so distorted and thrown off balance that man cannot right himself. God must redeem him from his sins and from himself by a spiritual birth from above. Those who remain "in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). Men, "Separate from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:2) are not sick but dead. The spirit of a "good

moral man” out of Christ is as dead as his buried body. Christ said, “None is good save one, even God” (Luke 18:19). Paul built David’s, “There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (Romans 3:12), into his great argument for universal human condemnation. Salvation by character is an impossibility. “For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it (salvation) is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Man’s obtaining his salvation on the condition of his own faith does not nullify God’s giving it to him by his grace. When Paul mixed with the throngs of Christ-less men in Ephesus or Corinth, he saw them as dead men! This helps explain his tireless energy and fiery zeal as a missionary to the heathen. God’s creating his church out of such human wreckage glorifies his wisdom, goodness, and power; and shouts aloft “the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness” (Ephesians 2:7).

01.06. ESSAY NO. 6

ESSAY NO. 6

Paul teaches that sinners are justified only when in faith they use the way of free grace ordained by God to save them; that he does not accept men who try to earn justification by self-effort (See Ephesians 2:8-9). Is not spurning a gift an insult to the giver? Sinners are justified by God's graces as the procuring cause plus their faith as the condition on which this cause functions. Man's being justified on this contingency does not militate against God's grace. In fact, justification "is of faith that it may be according to grace" (Romans 4:16). On any other ground, it could not be "the free gift" of grace. Faith and grace are correlatives, implying each other, whereas merit and grace are antipodes, mutually exclusive. Even Christians are warned that to mix the two is to fall "away from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Human merit and gospel grace are so contradictory everywhere that either disallows the other.

After Paul writes "not of (meritorious) works," he names another kind of works that is essential: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). It was in God's original plan to deliver men by his free grace from Satan for his own service. They are not saved by, but unto good works; they must be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). The failure to distinguish between meritorious and Christian works has led to the inexcusable error that there is an inconsistency between Paul and James. James said, "Faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26), meaning that faith in Christ which does not work for him is a dead faith. More inclusive Paul, who agrees perfectly with James about this fruit of faith, adds the basic truth that works apart from faith in Christ are dead, too. In this fuller teaching, he speaks of a kind of works utterly different from James' kind, a kind that deals with, not the fruit, but the root of faith. Not a shadow of inconsistency exists between the apostles.

Creation of the Church

Christians in Ephesus and all Asia Minor, the first readers of the book of Ephesians, were mostly Gentile converts from heathenism. Using the wretched, hopeless state of heathendom as a background, Paul comes, in the last half of the second chapter, to the thesis of the book—namely, the one, organic, universal church. His teaching is that God's covenant through Moses, which favored Jews above Gentiles, being provisional and having served its purpose in the divine economy, has been superseded, according to God's eternal purpose, by the better Christian covenant, which, abolishing the distinction between Jew and Gentile, creates "of the two, one new man, so making peace; . . . for through him (Christ) we both have access to one Spirit unto the Father" (See Ephesians 2:11-12). Paul having in the first chapter presented the church under the figure of a human body of which Christ is head, here presents it as a temple of which Christ is "chief cornerstone," and in which God dwells. The magnificent temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world, which stood in their city, would make this figure very realistic and impressive to the Ephesians. In this scripture, Christ is the maker and preacher of twofold peace.

First, he reconciles men to God; second, he reconciles men to men. Christians are all "one new man," somewhat as Norman and Saxon, after striving vainly to conquer each other three centuries in Britain, finally coalesced into one new people, the English. Since neither Norman nor Saxon conquered the other, but both as such ceased to be, never again could there be feuds between them. Likewise, Jew and Gentile "fitly framed and knit together" in Christ became "one new man," each saint fused with every other saint into an organism sharing the life of Christ, "a habitation of God in the Spirit"—something never seen among men before. God's creating of Jew and Gentile, with all their fanatic racial pride and exclusiveness, one harmonious church is the masterpiece of his redeeming wisdom, power, and grace. As there was better reason for two churches in Paul's day than there has ever been since, at no time since has there been a reason for two. Every race, culture, and civilization, in God's wonderful spiritual alchemy, may be "one new man," one body, one building, one church.

01.07. ESSAY NO. 7

ESSAY NO. 7

After writing, "For this cause . . ." with which Ephesians 3:1-21 opens, Paul breaks off. "For this cause" in Ephesians 3:14 picks up the connection and introduces another of Paul's great prayers. Apparently the prayer was in Paul's mind when he started the chapter, but thinking of something else that would add value to it, he writes the intervening verses before going on with the prayer. Ample cause existed for the prayer at first, but the long expository parenthesis reinforces it. The cause for the prayer was that God had made all men in his church equal. After enlarging on this cause in the parenthesis, Paul proceeds with his prayer.

Paul's Parenthesis The parenthesis speaks of, "The mystery (secret until revealed by God) which for ages hath been hid in God," but "hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to-wit (namely), that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs . . . through the gospel" with the Jews. Since Moses and the prophets foretold that Gentiles would share the blessings of Abraham, and also that Jews would be cast off, these cannot be the secret. But that the law of Moses, which was a barrier between Jew and Gentile, was to be annulled as God worked out his purpose, in order that he in sovereign grace apart from law might "create in himself of the two, one new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:15) seems to be the "mystery," which, although in God's mind from the beginning, was not made known to men till he revealed it to Christian apostles and prophets. Such a body was and is a new thing on earth—a new order of men, religiously. Before the church existed, all men were either Jews or Gentiles. But as men were called out of Judaism or paganism, respectively, into the church, individually, each was given a new name, Christian; collectively, they constituted the church, a new and third division of humanity. "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jew or to Gentile, or to the church of God" (1 Corinthians 10:32). When God did reveal that he was annulling the law as a system of religion to make way for the gospel of grace, the Jews, unwilling for God to have his way, rebelled. In ignorance, arrogance, and prejudice they took Judaism to be God's best and final form of religion, and in blind envy and fury tried to prevent his proceeding with his inevitable program by killing his Son. Even many Jews who came into the church neither really conceded the abrogation of the law nor gave full Christian fellowship to Gentile members. Is it now impossible for Christians to be mistaken, similarly, about the future of Christianity?

Men and Angels

"To make all men see the dispensation of the mystery . . .; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:9-10). In these verses we learn that the church which fuses Jew and Gentile into "one new man" by preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ," is the medium through which the many-sided wisdom of God is transmitted to both faithful and rebellious men and angels. Is it not illuminating to know that men and angels have a common interest in the marvels of Christianity, and that they together learn of the riches of God's wisdom and grace by

seeing them demonstrated in the church? That what concerns us has bearings elsewhere and gears us unto a movement that is older and larger than humanity? What can be more romantic and conducive to saint's believing that "ministering spirits" (Hebrews 1:14) serve them than the angels hovering about at Christ's Nativity, attending him in life and death, announcing his resurrection, and, as he ascended to heaven, foretelling his return to earth? What enlightenment to learn that "angels desire to look into the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow them" (1 Peter 1:12-13). Christ's mission to earth created a problem for men and angels. Probably angels still have a problem about Christ's return, as men do; but it is conceivable that they, unwilling to let future events solve it, presumptuously disrupt their fellowship over something they do not know, and about which it is un-necessary to know.

01.08. ESSAY NO. 8

ESSAY NO. 8 The long parenthesis with which Paul prefaces his prayer in Ephesians 3 is largely about himself. He knows that the prayer will have more meaning when his readers better understand that he is the chosen of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. God's "wisdom and prudence" are shown in his selection of Cosmopolitan Paul for the difficult task of welding Jew and Gentile into "one new man." With his exceptional native endowment plus his Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman citizenship, Paul must have been the best raw material on earth for God to use in forging his instrument to carry Christ to all men. Although Paul is in prison, he, inasmuch as Christians do not fight a losing war, closes this parenthesis on a note of triumph. Can saints write discouraging letters?

Paul's "That" Prayer

Paul's first prayer is built around three "whats" (Ephesians 1:18-19). This second prayer (Ephesians 3:16-19), built around three "thats," is, if possible, more comprehensive, elevated, and energetic. Paul prays God, "According to the riches of his glory" to grant Ephesian saints three tremendous things. To Paul nothing is too great or too good for God to do. Knowing that he was working with the grain of truth and reality, geared into eternal spiritual forces and verities, articulates with God, and that the whole universe was backing him, Paul, with a child's trust and hope, asks superhuman things of God and expects superhuman answers. If a man can be measured by his prayers, Paul was a superlatively big man.

"All the Fullness of God"

Paul's first prayer stresses "the exceeding greatness" of God's power toward saints. The first "that" in this second prayer—"that ye may be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man"—continues the theme. The second "that"—"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" is the very blood of saintly living. The third "that" is twofold: First, "To the end that ye ... may be strong to apprehend . . . and to know the love of Christ"; second, really the distillation of the whole prayer, "That ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God." This twofold "that" is related to the former "thats" as fruit to root. They involve it; of necessity it grows too, as they grow. Paul prays that Christians may live Spirit-enabled, Christ-indwelt, and God-filled lives. This prayer does not make sense unless man is a large being capable of holding much. That God in all his power, through Christ, in the Spirit, by faith takes up his fixed abode "in the inward man" to impassion and to enable from within is the great advance Paul's second prayer makes over his first. These prayers are not to be "explained and argued" intellectually; no elucidation is possible or necessary. "There's no other way . . . but to trust and obey."

If Paul in his first prayer feels the inadequacy of language to set forth God's power, and piles up five synonyms in trying to describe it as exhibited in God's raising and setting Christ as "head over all things" (taking a dead man and making him ruler of the universe), he feels it more in this prayer as his words, "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" and "filled unto all the fullness

of God" stagger under their load. But most of all, he feels it in his doxology: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church" (3:20, 21). Men may think of ages of blessedness and paradise of bliss, but God can go beyond even all their thinking. Paul is anxious that saints carry all the voltage of God's almighty power they are capacitated to carry.

Men's endless quest for power may cease only when they stop seeking within themselves and seek God's filling. When they do this, God is convenanted to see that they are filled with true power and greatness. God's whole universal, eternal, immutable system, however, turns on their cooperation. Both God's grace, glory and power, and man's sin, emptiness and death are full orb'd in Ephesians. What a God! What an opportunity for man!

01.09. ESSAY NO. 9

ESSAY NO. 9

First, Calling of the church (Ephesians 1:1-23, Ephesians 2:1-22, Ephesians 3:1-21); second, Conduct of the church (Ephesians 4:6-9); third, Conflict of the church (Ephesians 6:10-20) is an alliterative outline of Ephesians. A backward glance at the first division recalls that God in eternity planned the church, and that Christ in time purchased it to be his instrumental body and a temple for God's habitation—a new institution on earth. This exalted creation and use of the church demand correspondingly lofty living on the part of the church. Consequently, Paul begins the second division of the book, "I therefore . . . beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (Ephesians 4:1). "Therefore" shows that the "walking" is the effect of the "calling." Emphasizing this relationship of cause and effect by using "therefore" and "wherefore" eight times in the next two chapters, Paul mightily exhorts Christians unitedly to live in keeping with their high calling.

"The Unity of the Spirit" But as unity is a prerequisite to the worthy walk of a church, Paul considers it first in his discussion of conduct. By teaching men, praying for them, and pervasively influencing them, the Holy Spirit transforms cooperative men so that they share in his nature; then, he can dwell in them and use their yielded spirits and bodies in doing his work on earth. If Christ needed a body that he might accomplish his part in man's redemption, is it incredible that the Holy Spirit likewise needs human bodies in continuing the same work? Such Spirit-born and Spirit-led men constitute the church. Of course, the church, called, organized, and animated by the Spirit, instinct with his new order of life, possesses a unity derived from the Spirit. Unregenerate men do not have the proper motivation and enabling to attain this unity. "For heavenly tulips on earth, the bulbs must be imported from heaven." But without this Spirit-given, organic unity, no organization can be God's church. If a church loses this deep, constitutional unity, it ceases to be his church. This is the unity that Paul beseeches the Ephesians "to keep in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3) with diligence.

Seven Unifying Facts

Since this organic unity given by the Spirit, and by the Spirit only, is essential to the very being of the church, which cost God so much time, grace, and wisdom, Paul in the next three verses describes it by listing the seven unifying facts that comprise it. These unalterable, final facts demand either acceptance or repudiation. No other reaction is possible; a man who rejects even one of them is not to consider himself a Christian at all.

"One body." The church, the mystical union for which Christ asked his Father in the prayer, "That they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (John 17:22-23). "One Spirit." The third person in the divine trinity. Power centers in him as suffering does in Christ and grace in God. "One hope." Many elements enter into the Christian hope, but Paul in his writings, probably stresses "the blessed hope" of Christ's return most of all.

Nothing holds men together like a great common hope. "One Lord." "Christ, as a lamb standing in the midst of the throne," is placed at the center of these seven facts, suggestive of the truth that everything in the entire universe focuses in him. He is the key to all truth; all mysteries are uncoded in him. "The acknowledgement of God in Christ solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it" (Browning). "One faith." Attitude toward Christ is the same for all—the most learned, the most illiterate, the best, and the worst. A weak hand can take a gift as well as a strong one. Christians are all alike in their absolute commitment to Christ. "One baptism." Immersion of the body in water is what the Bible means by "baptism" unless a baptism of suffering, of the Holy Spirit, or of some other kind is specified. Sinners are saved "by grace . . . through faith," but not without water. In Paul's time, there were no unbaptized people in the church. "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." One sovereign person, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable" (1 Timothy 6:16). "A presence . . . and a spirit, that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things" (Wordsworth).

01.10. ESSAY NO. 10

ESSAY NO. 10 Our last study closed with the seven facts that constitute the fundamental, common ground of the organic unity of the church. Order and unity are basic in all the work, both physical (Genesis 1:2) and spiritual, of "The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:14). Without this inherent unity, derived from the Spirit, there can be no church or Christian fellowship. The Spirit by his teaching, praying, indwelling presence, and supplementary work gives to the church as its birthright this unity, keeps it against perversion, and expects the church to keep its outward manifestation "in the bond of peace" and brotherly love. If it does not do so, the church becomes flagrantly incomplete and ineffective. An Incomplete Local Church The church in Corinth was "the church of God" (1 Corinthians 1:2); though it lacked the outward bond of peace and harmony, its organic unity was still intact. Since no church in this abortive condition can function properly, the burden of Paul's letters to this church was that it might make its acquired conduct of a piece with its innate unity. And he gives the secret of this complete oneness, on the human side, when he counsels Christians to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). These strange, new Christian graces dig the very ground from beneath human merit, self-importance, envy and strife over position and leadership and the love of fame, "That last infirmity of noble mind" (Milton). Where these graces prevail, the glory of all human pride lies in the dust, dead. And because the lowly minded are the like-minded, disruption of even outward unity among humble brethren, absolute in their commitment to the "one Lord," is impossible. But until pride, "the mother sin," the ruin of angels and of men alike, is slain (and it is slain only at the foot of the cross), saints cannot manifest their constitutional unity in worthy conduct. Where God's "will is done, as in heaven, so on earth" can pride and worldliness remain?

Christ the Magnificent Giver

Under one central control, man's body is an organic unity, but there is much diversity of ability and work among its members. "So also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). Immediately after discussing the organic unity of the church, Paul takes up the diversity among its members (Ephesians 4:7-16). The importance of understanding the inter-relationship of these two is shown by Paul's discussing the matter in several of his epistles. Because brethren have not always understood it, much discord and unworthy conduct have plagued the church, throughout the centuries until now, to its untold injury. The passage begins: "But unto each one of us (not a soul slighted) was the grace given according to the measure (size) of the gift of Christ." Adam Clark's comment, "Grace may here signify a particular office . . . and the office is according to the free gift, each suited to the other," seems to represent Paul. In this passage Christ is the giver of five kinds of work, each kind accompanied by its corresponding opportunity and enabling "grace." He is said to give the men who fill the offices and do the work, "dividing to each one severally even as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). How can a brother who believes this envy a brother who may have a gift superior to his? Truly, Christ is a magnificent giver. Christians who say they have no gift, should cease repining and arise to "possess their possessions" (Obadiah 1:17). In the beginning of the Christian era,

Christ gave his church miraculous gifts, as needed. When the miraculously endowed apostles and prophets had finished their appointed task of founding and starting the church on its age-long crusade, a work that need never be repeated, they were discarded. Nevertheless, Christ, without miracles, continued to give his church, each succeeding generation until now, ever needed evangelists, pastors, and teachers. What more can Christ do for his church than he has done and is doing? He, who "according to the riches of his grace" and "unto the praise of his glory," long ago "gave himself for us" (Titus 2:14), and is still giving himself, has ever been and is now desirous of giving more than his people have ever been or are now willing to receive. If we are "miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17), it certainly is not his fault.

01.11. ESSAY NO. 11

ESSAY NO. 11

Christ gives his church, evangelist, elders, and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith . . . unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). There is a twofold unity in this chapter. The unity of these verses is not the absolute, organic unity received directly from the Holy Spirit, treated earlier in the chapter, but a relative unity of fellowship, attained progressively by a process of growth. If this lofty goal of Christ-likeness at first thought discourages, let us rather be encouraged by the implied possibilities within our nature to rise to the energizing challenge. In truth, this goal is so high that its perfect attainment awaits Christ's return; but the conduct of the church to be at all worthy of its high calling must show that the church is climbing upward toward this goal now.

Within the realm of organic unity, Christians are one, because all, born of the Spirit, share the divine nature and life; but within the realm of relative unity, they may safely differ, and of necessity do differ. The church has a divine, living, fixed core of fundamental, common truth surrounded by a rich variety of individual differences. Unity in Christ is a symphony of many instruments under the harmonizing direction of the Holy Spirit. Like the unity of a human body or of a tree, it is organic unity in diversity. Conformity and regimentation in secondary matters leave no room for independent study and individual growth, or for mutual edification. Externally enforced uniformity in such things is vicious in its tendencies, for it makes dependent, ignorant slaves to creeds and human authority. Within the Christian brotherhood, saints learn to make decisions of this nature in the light of partial knowledge, to allow for honest differences of judgment, and to give and take without being contentious. Otherwise, truth and unity of fellowship are both jeopardized.

Protracted Babyhood

"That ye may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrines, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error" (Ephesians 4:14). In this verse Paul names the malady that retards spiritual growth. In a similar strain, he writes Christians in Corinth that they are still carnal babes, given to childish jealousy and strife. And although the Hebrew brethren have had ample time to be grown up, they are still babes, needing milk. That protracted babyhood was prevalent in the church of the first century, is clear. (Is it less prevalent in our twentieth century?) But why so much arrested development? According to this Ephesian verse, clever, crafty teachers of error, playing with the souls of men and using their art to seduce Christians and to adulterate Christianity, counteract true teachers. However, in writing to Timothy, Paul makes unstable Christians at least equally responsible with false teachers for lack of progress in the church: "Preach the word . . . for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts (desires); and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:2-4). There are those, who "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7)—that is, professed truth seekers, never becoming firmly fixed in the conviction that

Christ is "the way and the truth"—are forever looking for something new, even new revelations from God, because they doubt the finality of his revelation in Christ. Such can never grow up, but are doomed to be children perpetually, "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men." These two classes—silly seekers with itching ears and shallow teachers with itching palms and swollen egos— are between them accountable for the many vagaries, fables, and cults in Christendom today. Designing, false preachers and teachers, and double-minded, half-converted members have ever plagued the church of our Lord. "Can the blind guide the blind? Shall they not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39).

01.12. ESSAY NO. 12

ESSAY NO. 12

After diagnosing protracted childhood in the church as the fruit of false teachers and fickle Christians, Paul prescribes the remedy: "Speaking truth in love may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). Christians in growing up into Christ, become progressively more identified with him, more incorporated with him into one body of which he is both head and heart, and more and more instinct with his life. Such is the heavenly goal to which Christians are called. Surely, we have plenty of room in which to grow.

"Speaking Truth in Love"

Redemptive truth draws a line between the church and the world. Then, brotherly love binds the church into "one flock." When men at Christ's call come out of the world into his church, they receive from him a new and vital oneness with himself. This oneness is so total that he and his people have but one and the same nature. Inevitably, it follows that, "As he is, even so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). That is, as long as Christ is rejected by the world, so are Christians. And as my hand and my foot, because my head with which they are incorporated into one organism correlates and uses them both, trust and aid each other; just so the members of the church, because Christ lives in and through them all, love, trust and help one another. Christianity, which is the masterpiece of God's wisdom, grace, and power, enables Christians to live "knit together ... in the bond of peace"—something fallen humanity has never been able to do by its own efforts. Saints who speak truth in love cannot compromise with the world or disrupt their fellowship over trifles. The church must never lose her direction and goal.

However, with worldliness rampant in the church and with love of brethren deficient, it is to be feared that Christians do not feel the importance of these two cardinal principles of Christianity. Near 125 A.D., Aristides wrote the Emperor, Hadrian: "The Christians know and trust God . . . They love one another ... If anyone among them is needy, and they do not have food to spare, they fast two or three days, that they may supply him with necessary food . . . Because of them there flows forth all the beauty that there is in the world . . . Truly, this is a new people and there is something divine in them."

"Something Divine in Them" No doubt, the pagan's "something divine in them" explains this "new people" better than he knew. Our verse says that the church is "fitly framed and knit together." That is, each member is rightly placed and mutually related, without deficiency or redundancy; it also says that each member according to his measure contributes to the building up of the church in love. And how does it account for this perfect organization and unique achievement? Each Christian is personally joined to Christ, which "joint supplieth" all needs. This juncture with Christ is the source of everything, "Something divine in them," indeed! Christ's, "I am the vine, ye are the

branches . . . apart from me ye can do nothing" is the simplest and best statement of this constitutional, Christian truth. In nature, the union of branch and vine is not superficial; the branch grows out of the very heart of the vine. The church, like the Bible and Christ, combines divine and human elements. Of all the countless weaknesses that have shown up in the church over the centuries, all are attributable to the human element—none to the divine. Since Pentecost, Christ has been "straitened" only in the church. For twenty centuries, nations have risen and fallen, religions have been born and buried, but the church lives on; she has defeated constant attacks from without and repeated betrayals from within—these things all prove her divine element. Is it not passing strange that Christians are foolish and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" to teach them that they still need divine, personal help as they did in becoming Christians in the first place?

01.13. ESSAY NO. 13

ESSAY NO. 13

After teaching that if Christians are to walk worthily of their calling, to detect false teaching, and to grow up in truth and love, they must humbly and unitedly, welcome Christ as an indwelling person to work out his will in them and through them to others, Paul, in the second half of Ephesians 4:1-32, continues his exhortation for worthy Christian living. A Clean Break With the World In a paragraph of eight verses (Ephesians 4:17-24), Paul insists on the utter incompatibility between unregenerate and regenerate men. According to him, they have no fellowship at all, for the former ends when the latter begins; they are mutually exclusive as are darkness and light. Before Jacob finally went back to Bethel (God's house) to dwell, he hid the foreign gods, possessed by his household "under the oak which was by Shechem" (Genesis 35:4). When these Ephesians themselves who practiced magical arts became Christians, they burnt their books of sorcery (Acts 19:10). This paragraph shows that when men accept Christ, many things must be buried or burned. They "put away . . . the old man . . . and put on the new man." Christians being no longer "alienated from the life of God," leave off their ignorance, vanity of mind, darkness of understanding, and hardness of heart. No portion of the Bible draws the contradiction between fleshly and spiritual men more fully, or portrays the depraved, wretched, natural man in more colorful terms than Ephesians does.

Man's Nadir The last item in this description of humanity without God, "being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," descends to the depths. Inasmuch as Christianity has its origin in God's heart and makes its decisive and final appeal to man's heart, when men get "past feeling," they are beyond God's moral reach. All Christians, like Matthias, successor to Judas, are chosen by their hearts (Acts 1:24). The human heart is the arena in which God and Satan continue their world-old struggle for the ownership of mankind. When Adam sinned, his capacity to feel shame and unworthiness before God was the human ground of God's further dealings with him. When men's hearts become so "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" that they are past feeling, they are indeed hopeless—hopeless as beasts, and more beastly. Because man is more than animal, when the animal in him dominates his higher nature, he is capable of sinking below the animal level. To call the conduct of shameless, reprobate men down through the ages "beastly" is to slander beasts. As long as a man can feel deeply enough for his conscience really to hurt, let him thank God and take courage, because even yet there is hope.

Men of today need to realize that their vaunted education and science can neither present nor correct this appalling waste of human life. With shame for crime and for the breakdown of common decency growing less and less, and the failure of human wisdom to cope with the conflicting interests of the nations becoming more and more manifest, why cannot unchristian men see that they are so "darkened in their understanding" "that their hands cannot perform their enterprise?" (Job 5:12). Why should Americans think they are immune to the destruction that has overtaken all

godless civilizations of the past? That men professing themselves to be wise should unconsciously become fools and invite God to take them "in their craftiness" is the grand irony of human history. Do all Christians see the need of this clean break with the world? If so, why so much worldliness in the church? If so, why do we not pay more attention to Paul's triple exhortation to the Corinthians? "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers . . . Come out from among them . . . Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 2 Corinthians 7:1). When we do this, God promises to be our Father and to make us his "sons and daughters." Christ advised, not paring the nails of an offending hand, but cutting off the hand.

Particular Sins

Following the foregoing paragraph on general fundamentals of worthy behavior, Paul closes the chapter with a paragraph of equal length dealing with four particular sins, which still vex the church and grieve "The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:14).

First, falsehood among the brethren, who are all parts of Christ's body, "each for all and all for each," is as dangerous and senseless as my eye misleading my hand into harm. Second, anger is legitimate sometimes, but since it gives Satan an opportunity and hatches sin when brooded upon, it must be banished before the set of the sun. As fire from flint, it should be hard to kindle and quick to go out. "He who goes to bed angry has the devil for a bedfellow." Christians therefore should not be angry with others even momentarily, unless they love them. Third, thievery is to be cured by the thief's cleanly breaking with dishonesty and going to work that he may have to give to others. And fourth, idle, worthless speech is to be crowded out by gracious, edifying speech. Observe that good supplants evil as in the spring new leaves on some trees push off old leaves that have clung to them all winter. Christianity never ends with negatives.

Next comes a moving exhortation not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who seals us as God's possession until our redemption in Christ culminates in the resurrection of our bodies at Christ's coming. Were not the Spirit a person, he could not be grieved. Were he not a person who cares, he would neither be grieved nor pleased with us. The pollution of his temple, our bodies, grieves him. The chapter closes with a list of six vices—all expressions of ill-temper belonging to the old man—which saints are happy, because they cannot do it by mere self-effort, to let the Spirit, in his own way, push out of their lives to make room for the peculiarly Christian virtues: kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness of each other "even as God also in Christ forgave you." Could an appeal be more tender and strong? Are we "kind one to another" in heart? If so, it will show up in our words, deeds, and manners.

01.14. ESSAY NO. 14

ESSAY NO. 14 In Ephesians 5:1-33, Paul continues to insist that what God has been doing for Christians from past eternity puts them, if they are not to be infamous in-grates, under imperative obligation to live in return sober, godly lives.

Weakness of Non-Christian Religions

Many religions teach moral principles, but have no power to get them practiced. Though Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and pagan philosophies preach much morality, they lack provision for its realization. I have read that when the Roman moralist, Seneca, Paul's contemporary, heard that Paul taught noble living, and that Paul actually practiced his teaching, he said: "Ah, if Paul does that, he really has something." And Judaism? It, too, lacks power to get its supreme moral and ethical code obeyed. It cannot be God's final dealing with the problem of sin. His eternal program provides something better to follow.

Power of Christianity

If Paul lived as he taught, and Seneca did not live as he taught, why the difference? Paul answers: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Php 4:13). Adam knew good and evil after he fell, but in the fall he had lost the power to do good or to avoid evil. By restoring this power to Adam's race in Christianity, God overcomes the fatal weakness of all other religions. "With men this (the power to regulate self) is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). That is, men have never been able to devise a social order with which to conquer their flesh; but with God's order, they may do so. It is as impossible for men to live Christian lives before they are born of the Spirit as it is for them to live fleshly lives before they are born of the flesh.

What is the nature of this Christian power? After God himself in grace had done the groundwork on earth, Christ came to earth that he as suffering man might add to the vital human touch (suffering men do not easily forget those who suffer with them), and finally the Spirit on Pentecost, bringing to a climax all that had preceded, with a burst of power inaugurated perfected Christianity. And only as a Christian can fallen man gear into God's power and be enabled to live as he thinks he should live. He has two master helps: Gratitude to God for delivering him from condemnation and the indwelling Spirit to enable him to win over the habit and power of racially acquired and individual sin. Not until Christians utilize both of these uniquely Christian aids can they be perfect as God is perfect. These two are not luxuries for favored saints, but necessities for all saints. Christians who are not more spiritual than ancient Jews could be are not using all the power to which they have access. Probably the unused power of the Holy Spirit exceeds the unused power of atomic energy. Only God knows how much this loss of power has crippled and is crippling his church. Saints, independent of this superhuman power, can no more grow up "into the fullness of Christ" than aliens independent of God's power as it applies to them can become Christians. God is an exact economist and gives to both only what is necessary. Is it not a perversion of the gospel and a falling away from grace for Christians to try to do in the power of the flesh what the Bible

teaches must be done in the power of the Spirit? According to Galatians 3:3-5, precisely this, rather than committing odious sins, is "falling from grace." The constitutional promise of the Old Covenant was the coming of the Messiah; the constitutional promise of the New Covenant is the coming of the Spirit to take up residence in the temple of God. In due time God kept both promises. "Because we are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). Is it not as great a sin and as big a mistake for a Christian to refuse Christ's Spirit as it is for a sinner to refuse his blood? If it is fatal for an alien to reject God the Son, why is it not as fatal for a Christian to reject God the Spirit? Do not both reject God the Father? Can the gospel produce Christians who are up to God's eternal standard with its climatic power reduced?

"In the Power of the Holy Spirit" The Bible often personally connects grace with God, suffering with Christ, and power with the Spirit. Christ says to his apostles just before Pentecost: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Paul tells the Ephesians he is praying that they may be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man," and that they may avail themselves to God's ability to bless them beyond their conceiving, "according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:16-20). Paul declares that he preaches "in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:19). And he prays that the Roman saints "may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). The Lord without working miracles "hath power to make him (a weak brother) stand" (Romans 14:4). As God chooses to work in nature without the miraculous, but not without the mysterious and the supernatural, so he chooses to work in Christianity. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth" (Mark 4:26). No more in religion than in nature is God limited to miracles. As the surf-waves along the beach, before they flood the beach, must be backed up by the non-miraculous tide, so fallen man must have the non-miraculous "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5) before he becomes a Paul.

"Imitators of God"

"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ loved you" (Ephesians 5:1). An exhortation to live as God lives and to love as Christ loves! "It is by no breath, turn of eye, wave of hand" that this exhortation can be realized. The "old man" may be trained to imitate God outwardly in some things, as parrots may be trained to talk as men talk, but such imitation lacks reality and life. Only "beloved children" who are "born anew" with the nature of their Father can climb this lofty peak. The exhortation necessarily implies the truth set forth in this paper. Only Spirit-born and Spirit-enabled men need consider it; it is not intended for others. "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

01.15. ESSAY NO. 15

ESSAY NO. 15 The second half of Ephesians is a long exhortation to move Christians to "walk worthily of" their eternal calling. Observe how this half of the book with its "therefores" leans back on the first half. Paul knows that after Christians appreciate "the glory of God's grace" and "the unsearchable riches of Christ," exhorting will be effective. To lead saints into deeper understanding and appreciation of the goodness of God, as Ephesians does, is a far better way to keep dancing, drinking, fornication, and such like out of the church today than is melodramatic preaching and writing about these sins.

Belial and Mammon

"But fornication ... or covetousness, let it not be named among you . . . nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting" (Ephesians 5:3-4). The closely allied sins of fornication and covetousness, "the lust of property," grow out of trying to fulfill life by means of fleshly gratification. In the Bible and in life they are often found together. Milton describes Belial: "Than whom a Spirit more lewd fell not from heaven, or more gross to love vice for itself"; and Mammon: "The least erect Spirit that fell from heaven ... his looks . . . always downward bent, admiring . . . heaven's (golden) pavement." Both fornicators and covetous men are idolaters, "whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly . . . who mind earthly things" (Php 3:19). Idolatry is possible without images.

"Foolish talking"—senseless prating and frivolous chatter of dull men. "Jesting"—smutty jokes and wanton banter of clever men. Christ's "idle word" suggests an idle boy sauntering about without direction and purpose. None of this indecency and aimlessness, bred and augmented by idleness and evil company, befit the earnestness and elevation of Christians, who must not "wound modesty." How few the grains of gold in the sand that streams through our lips; how easy to throw our brains into neutral and let the tongue idle on. "Oft-times the best command of language is silence." This passage contains a warning against "empty words." Wicked men invent false reasons to justify "the works of the flesh." Knowing nothing of Christian temperance and moderation, they say such natural propensities as sex and the acquisition of wealth cannot be sinful; they argue, since Christians are under grace, not law, and since God's grace is sufficient to cover all sins, they may continue to sin with impunity. But all such imposing on God's goodness and turning his grace into lasciviousness, Paul blasts with: "Let no man deceive you with empty words; for because of these things (all moral filth) cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 5:6).

Darkness Becomes Light The change that becoming a Christian makes in one's life is again vividly portrayed. It is transition from darkness into light, without twilight. "Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord: walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) . . . and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them . . ." (Ephesians 5:7-17). When Christians come out of the darkness into the light and, exhibiting the triad, "all goodness and righteousness and truth (sincerity)," live clean lives, they need make little special effort to avoid

compromising economical, social, or religious entanglements with those who remain in the darkness, for darkness cannot abide in light. The world, with its life "alienated from the life of God," has no use for Christians who challenge its way of life, and consequently will avoid them rather than the other way round.

Christians cannot be indolent and neutral, merely harmless, but, realizing that to kill time is to injure eternity, they wisely work and are aggressively positive, "redeeming the time." They should never be unemployed nor triflingly employed. And as darkness is overcome by light in the physical realm, so moral darkness, made manifest and shown up in its true colors by the searchlight of Christianity, is recognized for what it is, and is overcome. This scripture characterizes saints and gives them their work and purpose in the world.

"Filled With the Spirit" From the time of ancient Troy, the inhabitants of Asia Minor had been a lighthearted, convivial race. To Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor, Paul writes: "Be not drunken with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This sociable people, who had once found excitement and animation in wine and carnal fellowship, are now to find these things in the Holy Spirit and spiritual fellowship. As vegetation and animals change with altitudes, so coming to Christ lifts men to higher levels where "old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). From the fact that instead of "filled with the Spirit," a companion verse, Colossians 3:16, has, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," some have concluded that the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ are the same thing. Inasmuch as it is impossible for Christians to be filled with the Spirit unless they are full of the word, too, the two expressions mean, practically, the same thing. It does not follow, however, that the Holy Spirit and his sword, which is his word (Ephesians 6:17) are identical any more than a soldier and his sword are identical. As a soldier supplements his sword with other weapons to do things a sword cannot do, so the Holy Spirit, for the same reason, supplements his sword.

Instead of teaching that the Holy Spirit and the word are the same, or even that the Spirit dwells in the word, Ephesians 3:16 teaches that the Spirit dwells in saints to strengthen them with power in the inward man. And Romans 8:26 says: "The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." The manner of the Holy Spirit's inward working transcends the power of language to describe, for it cannot be put into words at all. Be it known, however, that the Spirit never works in contradiction to, but always in conjunction with his written word. Do men live and die as Paul lived and died, unless they believe a superhuman power that overcomes sin and death works within him? We miss too much when we forget that the power of Christianity, from Pentecost onward, comes to focus "in the power of the Holy Spirit," as he strengthens the inward man down to subconscious depths. The Bible is not God.

01.16. ESSAY NO. 16

ESSAY NO. 16 To Ephesian saints, Paul's contrast between Christianity and heathenism in life and worship must have been very realistic. Their former elaborate, drunken, licentious feasts, honoring heathen gods and goddesses, in which abominable rites were practiced in the name of religion, had been given up for simple, sober, spiritual singing and thanksgiving. Inasmuch as music, a tonic to mind and heart, is so closely allied to behavior, his exhortation, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always" (Ephesians 5:18-20), with divine penetration digs down to the roots of society. Even pagan Plato long before had said that to change the music of a people was to change their morals. In studying the subject of Christian music, this scripture is pivotal. The Greek Catholic church, which should know Greek, never believing that "psallo" in this passage authorizes instrumental music in worship, has never used it even until now. To use it when the New Testament here, nor elsewhere, authorizes it is to show lack of faith in and respect for God's wisdom and authority. In principle, to use it is to start back through Protestantism and Roman Catholicism to ancient, sensuous heathenism. Christian worship must be spiritual in its nature, not sensuous. God knows how to safeguard his church against worldliness.

Subject One to Another In the next twenty verses, Paul discusses three phases of "subjecting yourselves to one another" (Ephesians 5:21): wives in subjection to their husbands, children to their parents, and servants to their masters, respectively. Wine makes men boastfully self-important; it foments licentiousness, discord and strife, and is a troublemaker generally. Operating in reverse to all this, submission reduces the friction of life and promotes peace and comfort. Unnecessary trouble arises when somebody in home, business, or religious life, instead of being subject to others, in non-essential things, contentiously stands upon his own "rights."

Two Great Mysteries The last paragraph of Ephesians 5:1-33 reveals that God's eternal plan for his church begins to take form in the creation and marriage of Eve. It reveals also that Eve is a type of things to come. The mystery of the creation of Adam's wife from his opened side is a prophetic representation of the greater mystery of the creation of Christ's bride (his church) from his pierced side. The similitude of these two mysteries is so complete that Paul in discussing them often steps back and forth from one to the other. His immediate objective is to show the balanced parallel that wives should be subject to their husbands as the church is subject to Christ, and that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church. This is indeed an astonishingly fruitful study that, according to the attention given it, yields more and more treasures. As Adam was lonely and incomplete until God gave him Eve, of his own body, to meet his need, so Christ after sin despoiled heaven and earth had a sense of loss and incompleteness until God gave him "the church, which is his body, the fullness (completeness)" of his instrument "to reconcile all things unto himself . . . whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Colossians 1:20). As "Adam was not beguiled," but chose rather than to give Eve up to suffer and to die with her, so Christ, "who did no sin," chose from all eternity to identify himself with his church in suffering and in

glory. The inviolable oneness of Adam and Eve is typical of the mystical, spiritual oneness of Christ and his church. Christians are "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14) and become his body. Christ from heaven said to Saul, who was persecuting his church, "Saul, why persecutest thou me" (Acts 9:4). When we are tempted to speak or write harshly to or about a Christian, should not the truth that Christ considers it as done to him personally shock us into frozen silence? "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).

Yes, God so ordered the mutual relationship between Adam and Eve as to prefigure the mutual relationship between Christ and his bride on earth and in heaven. The language of Tennyson's saint as she meditates upon her eternity with Christ, "One sabbath deep and wide . . . the bridegroom with his bride," puts this beautiful truth into beautiful words. When we think on these things and come to realize what "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27) really means for time and eternity, our whole lives will take on new meaning and worth.

Idealism Is Realistic The true idealist is the only true realist. Paul's Christian idealism and other-worldness is the only feasible way to improve this world. He knows that the way to have better homes is to get husbands and wives to understand the sacred place and honor God gives marriage and home. After this epistle was read in the church at Ephesus would not indifference, un-kindness, bickering, fornication, adultery of the heart, and divorce grow less within its homes? Paul knows too that as the church improves it will spread. The fact that earnest Christian missionaries set a high value on the influence of their own Christian homes in propagating Christianity among heathen peoples today corroborates the wisdom, power, and reality of Paul's teaching and exhorting.

Christian marriage is a threefold mating: biological, mental, and spiritual. And a Christian home is a place for husbands to learn to exercise authority graciously and wives to submit becomingly. It does not behoove two Christians, welded into one for life, as they pledge in their marriage vows, for the purpose of making a Christian home, the most heavenly achievement on earth, for the husband to exercise despotic authority or for the wife to yield slavish submission. When things go wrong in the home of worldlings, they have little recourse but alienation and divorce. If misunderstandings arise, as well they may, in the homes of Christians, they should be thankful for an opportunity to learn humility, patience, forgiveness, and love—all qualities they must learn somewhere, some way, sometime before they enter heaven.

01.17. ESSAY NO. 17

ESSAY NO. 17

Imagine the first reading of this epistle in the assembly of the Ephesian church. A letter from their loved and trusted apostle, who was a prisoner in far away Rome, was a memorable event. Tensely, every member listened to every line. As the reader came to the passage naming husbands and wives or parents and children or masters and slaves (likely many were slaves), how agape with interest each respective group drank in every word of its special message! Did some earnest husband speak right out: "Brother, please read that again"?

Children and Parents

Into the discussion of this theme, Paul crowds much truth that is vital to human well-being. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that . . . thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3). This passage takes for granted that Christian parents will have their children obey them as God's representatives (think of that, parents) until they are old enough to obey God directly. Then, says Paul, it is right by the fundamental law of humanity and by the written law of God that children continue to obey their parents "in the Lord." "Remember the sabbath day" and, "Honor thy father and mother"—that is, remember God and parents—the only positive commandments in the Decalogue, are so closely allied that Leviticus 19:3 runs them together: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father; and ye shall keep my sabbaths." The Jew who broke either of these commandments paid with his life. The time may well come when parents no longer want their children to obey them, but Christian children, as Joseph did, will honor their parents, living and dead. Never can their parents say with King Lear: "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend . . . How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" The attitude of children toward their parents is a test of their attitude toward God. Respect for age and reverence for God go together. Observe that Paul quotes with approval God's recipe for longevity, namely, the honoring of parents. Is it not well to remember, too, that China, with her oldest civilization on earth, has, even without the written law of God, always honored parents?

Parents and Children

"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Men and women who are unwilling to assume "the happy tribulation of parenthood" should not marry. Prolonged willful sterility perverts God's will as expressed in nature and in his word from the beginning. In nothing, at any time or in any place, can his flawless will be circumvented without frustration and loss. Husbands and wives are naturally expected to become parents, and are responsible for nurturing their children.

Since only God knows the biological and social heritage of babies, the psychological process that takes place in the soul of all growing children, and all the abysmal physical, mental, spiritual mysteries that go into the making of men, he only is able to give mankind perfect guidance. Hence,

when God offers men the family as the social institution perfectly adapted to their exceedingly intricate needs, they should profoundly appreciate his gracious, infallible help and use it with utmost confidence and diligence. Parents who fail to do so challenge the wisdom and the goodness of God, and perpetrate the deepest possible wrong against their children. When the family is misused, it breaks down. This verse convicts fathers who shirk their part in the family program and leave it all to mothers. The fixed responsibility of fathers in this program under Moses is continued in Christ. And because they are more likely to resort in haste to the much easier expedient of crushing authority instead of prayerful instruction and prudent discipline than are mothers, fathers are warned against provoking their children to resentment. A faithful mother said she thought the reason God made mother love so strong was that mothers without it could never bear up under the stress and burden of rearing a family. Indeed being good parents is a most difficult thing. Eli was a good high priest and David was a great king, but both were poor fathers. Mothers, think on Christ's tender appreciation of his mother, and of his solicitous provision for her, even from his cross. True mothers are "in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4).

Master and Slaves This topic concludes Paul's threefold discussion on "Subjection." That Christianity, which levels things and makes all men brothers, and the pagan institution of slavery, which divides men into two antagonistic classes—masters and slaves—are mutually exclusive is self-evident. But as great social changes must begin with thoughts and feelings, the inevitable clash between the two does not take the form of a sudden, violent upheaval; rather, it is a powerful, quiet, inner way of life that comes from God to enlighten and change the nature of men. Christianity lights an unquenchable time fuse among men, which must eventually destroy all the wrongs of earth. It is the only answer for the seething race feuds, the flooding waves of crime, the stubborn struggle between capital and labor, and all the wars—in brief, the only answer for all national and international disorders around the globe. Earth's problems are ever essentially the same, and Christianity is ever the sovereign panacea for them all. In the meantime, before the complete triumph of Christianity, to the measure that its ameliorating principles spread among men the life of individuals, institutions, and races improve. In the matter of slavery, for instance, let both master and slave but "practice the presence of God," as Paul here teaches they should, and behold the marvelous result: the labor becomes easier to the slave, pleasing to the master and slave, for God determines their treatment of each other. Christianity is not competitive but cooperative. Even leaving eternity out of consideration, when men reject God's way of life in Christ for them, they in one act commit both their greatest sin and their greatest error. God's wishes and man's needs being identical, both are served, or neither is served. How majestically profound and sublime in its simplicity and infinite efficacy is Christianity! Judged by its heavenly fruits, truly it is born of God.

01.18. ESSAY NO. 18

ESSAY NO. 18 The calling of the church is God's gracious work, the conduct of the church is man's grateful work, and the conflict of the church is Satan's malicious work. The first eight "Studies in Ephesians" deal with the calling, the next nine with the conduct, and now comes the conflict of the church.

"Your Adversary the Devil"

(1 Peter 5:8) The devil and Christians are irreconcilable foes. Since he is incorporeal, Christians can know him only as the Bible reveals him. Judging by the fullness of this revelation, students of the Bible conclude God deems it imperative that Christians, who must "resist the devil," know about his existence, purposes, and tactics. Without divine instruction and aid, obviously, God thinks they will be unable to resist him. Indeed, before meeting an enemy in battle, one needs to know his objective, resources, and plans. Consequently the Bible gives Satan's origin, his earthly activities, and his destiny.

Satan's Origin In pronouncing the doom of the kings of Babylon and Tyre, Isaiah 14:12-20 and Ezekiel 28:11-19, respectively, portray a larger figure than these kings. The world and the being described extend beyond earthly limits and human experiences and capabilities. These passages teach, I think, that God made a mighty angel and gave him a place of dignity and trust in the government of heaven until in pride he broke faith and appropriated his gifts to his own use and self-exaltation. Whereupon God said to the rebel: "Thou hast sinned . . . therefore I have cast thee to the ground." This is the being who later on earth became "the old serpent, he that is called the devil and Satan" (Revelation 12:9). "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star! . . . how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12). Both 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6 speak of angels that lost heaven because they sinned. Does not Paul allude to Satan's pride and fall when he writes Timothy not to appoint as elder, "A novice lest being puffed up he fall into condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6) ? Upon the return of the seventy, exulting that demons were subject to them, surely Christ had in mind Satan's fall from heaven when, as a warning against the danger of pride, he said to them: "I behold Satan as lightning fallen from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

According to Biblical usage, godless men, Satan's understudies, are sometimes identified with him much as David is often identified in the Psalms with Christ. In speaking to the twelve, Christ said: "One of you is a devil" (John 6:69). When Peter offered the satanic advice to Christ that he must not die, Christ said to him, "Get thee behind me Satan" (Matthew 16:23). When men become tools of Satan, is it not fitting to identify them with him? It little becomes men who are so ignorant of the mysteries of life, especially the life of spirits, to think that mind cannot mix with mind. Who can explain the marvels of animal instinct? The Bible teaches that Satan as well as God permeates human spirits. If it does not explain the method, what difference does it make to men of the faith?

Satan's Earthly Aims and Activities Is it unreasonable that God created man to take the place left vacant by the fallen angels? Soon after man's creation, in any event, Satan began to render him unfit for that place. His effort in Eden henceforth is the earthly aspect of the earlier feud between him and God in heaven. All the Bible except its first two chapters and its last two, supported by all uninspired history, shows his unbroken success in corrupting the far greater part of the succeeding generations of men. Mark Twain said that anybody who could command such innumerable multitudes of men through the ages must be an interesting personality, and he wanted to meet him.

After Satan as usurper had held sway over the earth for some four thousand years, "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman," to challenge his illegal reign. He knew the issue between him and Christ and tried, using Herod as his understudy, to destroy Christ in the cradle. He, as Christ was readying his rule to restore the world to its rightful owner, did his utmost in the great temptation in the wilderness to beguile Christ as he had done Eve in the beginning. Though utterly defeated, he continued to dog Christ to the cross. The resurrection completely broke Satan's power and greatly increased God's power. A fantastic metaphor of the early church that God baited a hook with the flesh of his Son, and that Satan, thinking to be rid of his foe, gobbled the bait down to find that he had swallowed the fatal hook, holds much of the essence of Christian doctrine. Though Satan's power of death has been brought to naught and a suspended sentence hangs over him, he is still permitted for God's allotted time to be "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and to walk "about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He is still "a terror" and spreads great confusion among men. He makes "the world as a wilderness." His only adversary is the church. Were it out of the way, his rule would be universal. This is the secret of his bitter, endless conflict with the church. As he knows he cannot win in open, fair war, he resorts to many wiles and artful devices. His chief strategy is deceit. He works best under cover, sows tares in among the wheat while men sleep, and "fashioneth himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). God has so fully revealed him and his many devices and stratagems that there is little excuse for Christians being beguiled by him.

Satan's Final Destiny

Christ's complete, final victory over his wily antagonist, the great pretender, according to Revelation 20:10, is absolutely certain. How much more time God's eternally fixed schedule is to consume in accomplishing this "consummation devoutly to be wished," he has not seen fit to reveal. Is it possible, brethren, that time and detail, because of their secondary importance are purposely left in the background that all emphasis may be thrown upon Christ the person who effects the victory? "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil . . . , walketh about" (1 Peter 5:8).

01.19. ESSAY NO. 19

ESSAY NO. 19

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Probably Paul's experience when he planted the church at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41) is reflected in this scripture. In this city given over to magic, exorcism, and the superstition of Diana, "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul," an example of which is expelling evil spirits by Paul's handkerchief being taken to men possessed by them. These special miracles were needed to counteract Satan's special activities in this great, unutterably wicked city. If God allows the agents of Satan to work miracles as he did in the case of Pharaoh's magicians, and as he will again (Revelation 13:13-15), indeed he will have his servants work greater miracles to confound their enemies. Certainly, for some reason Paul is more keenly conscious of, and is brought more fact to face with organized, spiritual opposition in a realm inhabited by both men and demons in Ephesians than in any other letter. In this matter he agrees with Christ who also taught that Satan's kingdom possesses order and unity, for, said he, were it divided, it could not stand.

"In the Heavenly Places" The phrase, "In the heavenly places" is found in Ephesians five times, but not elsewhere in the Bible. From the first three passages in which it occurs, we learn that Christ sits "in the heavenly places" at God's right hand, dispensing "every spiritual blessing" to Christians, who are said to sit with him. The other two passages (Ephesians 3:10 and Ephesians 6:12), put Christ's adversary with his "hosts of wickedness"; that is, "The prince of this world," whom Christ said he would "judge and cast out" (John 12:31), also "in the heavenly places." Paul has already said in Ephesians 2:2 that men before they become Christians walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." The phrase seems to mean, therefore, the battlefield where the forces of Christ and the forces of Satan met and wrestled somewhat as Jacob and an angel wrestled at the Jabbok. It includes, then, the earth and the region of air up to the throne of God. (We need to remember that this matter transcends human searchings, that revelation is our only source of information, and that we should be happy to learn anything God puts into his Book). The Bible throughout abundantly supports this view. Fallen Satan and at least some fallen angels range the earth and the heavens. According to Job 1:6-19, Satan, after "going to and fro in the earth," presented himself before God, along with the sons of God, to get permission to "sift" Job. After receiving this permission, he returned to earth to afflict Job. It is revealed in 1 Kings 22:19-23 that God on his throne surrounded by "all the host of heaven" gave "a lying spirit" leave to enter into godless Ahab's false prophets to lead him to his death in battle. According to 1 Chronicles 21:1, "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David against Israel," thereby causing the death of seventy thousand Israelites. Of course such things are always Satan's joy for "he was a murderer

from the beginning ... is a liar" (John 8:44), and hence hates life and truth. Zechariah 3:1-2, is a revealing scripture. It shows Joshua the high priest interceding for Jerusalem before Jehovah "and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary" as accuser of Jerusalem. Finally, for an illuminating glimpse of the wrestling between the forces of God and the forces of Satan "in the heavenly places," and of the interlocking of the work of angels and of men in God's government of his universe (see Daniel 10:1-21). The archangel, Michael, and another angel of high rank take the side of the Jews against two angels called "the prince of Persia" and "the prince of Greece," respectively, in the international struggles of these three peoples a few centuries B.C.

What could Cyrus the Great and Alexander the Great know about God's being their generalissimo, and about some angels being for and some against them! Men live in a world of which the most important things can be learned only by faith. Knowing that all "these things were written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), we can better understand our Christian warfare today. By faith we know that God "maketh his angels winds, and ministers a flame of fire," and uses them as "ministering spirits, sent forth to do services for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:7; Hebrews 1:14). This knowledge gives us patience, comfort, and hope, for no matter what happens among men around the earth, no matter what demons side with Communism or Catholicism, God still reigns to the eventual destruction of all "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" both angelic and human. Can we be thankful enough for the written word of God? Do we study it enough? How much do we even read it? The Christian Armor

Paul opens the discussion of this topic by insisting that Christians in their wrestling with Satan will need "the exceeding greatness of his (God's) power to us-ward" (Ephesians 1:19); will need to "be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might"; will need "the whole armor of God." Then Paul in an extended metaphor names six items of a Roman soldier's armor and tells what they stand for in the armor God furnishes his soldiers. Finally, he names prayer in the spirit, which gives set and effectiveness to the whole armor. No Christian "can please him who enrolled him as a soldier" without constant communion with him and referring everything to him. In the classic wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus, it was useless for Hercules to throw Antaeus for he always arose from mother earth renewed in strength after a fall. But when he held Antaeus aloft, he easily strangled him. When Christians in their wrestling with Satan allow him to break their union and communion with Christ, they are easily vanquished.

01.20. ESSAY NO. 20

ESSAY NO. 20 This final "study" in Ephesians deals mainly with the organic, universal church. As God works out his eternal program, the humanly impossible task of getting Jew and Gentile, who had been dead together in sin, "alive together with Christ ... to sit with him in the heavenly places," "fitly framed and knit together" for love and life . . . , and "buildded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" is a marvelous demonstration of his infinite wisdom, grace, and power to harmonize incongruities, "so making peace." In this treatise on the one, inter-racial church, Paul rises above the personal and the local. He says nothing about the organization and government of local congregations. As Galatians settles the question of Christian freedom for all time, so Ephesians settles the question of Christian unity for all time. The fact that both of these books (each with its special, cardinal, Christian doctrine) are still needed as much in the twentieth as in the first century is sad evidence of how little Christendom, despite its professed fidelity to the Bible, actually follows it. The spiritual elevation of Ephesians with its loftiest peak, "The riches of his grace," is hardly equaled elsewhere in the Bible. Its atmosphere is calm and clear, its sky bright and sunny.

Christ Creates His Church In the prologue of John's gospel, there are two divine creations—a physical and a spiritual. Concerning the former: "All things were made through him (Christ); and without him was not anything made that hath been made" (John 1:3). Concerning the latter: "They that were his (Christ's) own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). What a privilege to have such unmerited good news to believe! What a calamity if man were so constituted, as some say, that he could not believe!

Man has nothing whatsoever to do with either the planning or the making of these two creations. He had as well try to make a world as to try to make a church. His part in each is the precious opportunity of accepting what God freely provides, of cooperating in confident faith and strict obedience, and thus of becoming a fellow-worker with God unto the blessed increase. In neither does success depend upon noble blood, nor strong, natural character to will and to run ("the will of the flesh"), nor human organizations and institutions ("the will of man"). Human pedigree, individual intellectual and moral excellencies, and ecclesiastical system and priestly craft all combined cannot give "the right to become children of God." The church is more than a humanly-wrought association of believers. It is a brotherhood of divinely-regenerated men and women, who by the authority of one Spirit are "all baptized into one body," and are "all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). All such believers are "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14). That is, Christ through the Holy Spirit from within, incorporates them with himself into a living organism of which he is head and they are the body. Christ and Christians share the same nature and life, as all parts of the fleshly man share the same blood. These "things . . . entered not into the heart of man," but "God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Spiritual Christians believe and experience all this, and live in its power. But, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for

they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Corinthians 2:14). As a man, upon becoming a father, though all arguing beforehand cannot make him know the affections of a father's heart, knows them after his child is born, so the natural man can know spiritual things only by being "born of water and Spirit" unto the realm of spiritual things. Fallen man cannot understand and live the spiritual life until he comes into possession of it by this spiritual birth. If a man can live a Christian life without becoming a Christian, why did Christ come to earth, die, rise, ascend to heaven, and send the Holy Spirit to inaugurate the church on Pentecost?

There is much fundamental, common truth in the three great analogues of the church (body, temple, and bride) in Ephesians, nevertheless, each analogy has its own particular truths. First, "The church, which is his (Christ's) body," shows forth on earth the glories of her head, who is enthroned in heaven. Through her, Christ contracts, speaks to, and acts upon the world spiritually. Second, the Holy Spirit as the resident, executive member of the godhead, dwells in the church to vivify and employ her as his living, redemptive organ among the children of men around the earth. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Third, the church is "espoused ... as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2), which espousal is to be followed at the Bridegroom's coming by "the marriage of the Lamb and his wife (who) hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7), "that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). For all this present and future to be realized however, the church must reproduce both Christ's crucifixion and resurrection in her life. This twofold life is a risen life in union and communion with her risen Lord and a crucified life in relationship to the world. The church is committed to this living-dying life in her baptism: "We are buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." In their conversion, men are delivered unto a "form (pattern) of teaching" of the dead and risen Christ that molds them into his likeness (Romans 6:4; Romans 6:17). This is Paul's "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10). The church is now identified with Christ in his rejection by the world, but when her marriage is come, she will then be identified with him on his glorious throne, thenceforth "in the ages to come" (Ephesians 2:7). No other creatures are so blessed in the present or can be so blessed in the future as are members of the church. Reader, are you "espoused ... as a pure virgin to Christ"? Can you afford not to be?

02.000. Contents

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02.01. ESSAY NO. 1

ESSAY NO. 1

Racially, the Galatians were Gauls, or Celts, who had migrated from north of the Black Sea into Europe. The main body of these Gauls finally established themselves in northern Spain, France, and the British Isles. But a branch of them crossed the Dardanelles and settled, during the third century B.C., in central Asia Minor. The Galatians, among whom Paul on his first great missionary journey near the middle of the first century A.D. organized several churches, were descendants of these Gauls.

Out of much personal experience with the volatile Gauls, Julius Caesar wrote: "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted." Thierry, a modern historian, says they were, "Frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, but at the same time extremely changeable, inconstant, proud of show, perpetually quarrelling, the fruit of excessive vanity." The Galatians as pictured by Luke in Acts and in the epistle Paul later wrote to them answer to these characterizations. The Galatians of Lystra, whom Paul at first "scarce restrained" from worshipping him, soon afterward stoned him and left him for dead (Acts 14:8-9). Their fickle character as sketched in this incident is confirmed and developed in their portrait as painted in the book which we are now to study.

Many of us Americans with Gaulish blood, coming mainly through Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and French channels, in us have, as might be expected, some of the characteristics, both good and bad, of our ancient Galatian brethren. Should not this put us on guard against the vanity, instability, and untrustworthiness which were so prevalent in them? Alas, however, the Galatians are but an outstanding example of how prone men in general, from Adam onward, have ever been and still are to "drift away from" the blessings they have received from God.

General Survey of Galatians Theme: Liberty in Christ

Personal portion: The apostle of liberty. Paul shows that he is an apostle equal in authority and knowledge to Peter, James, and Galatians 1:1-24, Galatians 2:1-21.

Doctrinal portion: The doctrine of liberty. Paul shows that justification is by "faith working through love" instead of by "works of law." Galatians 3:1-29, Galatians 4:1-31.

Hortatory portion: The life of liberty. Paul exhorts those "having begun in the Spirit" to "walk by the Spirit" and to bear "the fruit of the Spirit." Galatians 5:1-26, Galatians 6:1-18.

This skeletal outline of Galatians is the strong, bony framework that supports the meaty reasoning and the moving exhortation for Christian liberty and spirituality that make up the body of the epistle. Just as Ephesians settles the question of Christian unity, Galatians settles the question of Christian independence and freedom. "Every argument in Galatians is a thunderbolt."

Galatians, which in fewest words reduces Christianity to its simplest elements, is an inspired classic. It sets forth the gospel, without admixture of legal conditions, as the perfected agency of the pure grace of God to rehabilitate ruined humanity. It shows, as we shall see in our studies, the utter impossibility of uniting the religion of the flesh and the religion of the Spirit. Luther wrote: "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it I am as it were in wedlock." Referring to Luther's commentary on Galatians, John Bunyan said: "I prefer this book of Martin Luther (excepting the Holy Bible) before all other books that I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience."

Inasmuch, as Galatians is an open book free to all, let us begin and, no matter what we may find, continue our studies of this spirit-breathed, vital, Christian document with an open mind, fully ready to be guided by, "The Spirit of truth . . . into all the truth" (John 16:13). Our method should be both microscopic and telescopic that things both near and far may be discovered. May we, "handling aright the word of truth," discern between the great and the small, see truth in perspective, and give fundamental Christian truths their rightful emphasis and place of fixed, dominant centrality.

Antecedent Matter

According to Acts, as Paul first evangelized Galatia, unconverted Jews, "filled with jealousy" because of his success among the Gentiles, incited mobs that forced him to leave several cities. Despite this, the impressible Galatians continued to respond so favorably to his preaching that flourishing churches began to spring up over the country.

Then Jewish legalists and partyists in the church, who had never been really converted from Moses to Christ and consequently did not know the power of God's grace and Spirit over human life, were determined that Gentile Christians should observe the customs of Moses. Paul had led the heathen Galatians to Christ without taking them through Moses, and, if these Judaizers were to succeed in binding Moses on them, they must first shake their confidence in Paul. Therefore they persuaded the Galatians that Paul was not equal to the original apostles in knowledge and authority, and that he did not preach the full, final gospel. They did not repudiate Christianity outright, but said to the Galatian Christians: "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (.Acts 15:1). That is, these bigots conceded that Paul's gospel was all right as far as it went, but insisted that, being the gospel only in part, it was inadequate and would not save unless it were eked out and perfected by legal ordinances and rites. Since this perversion of the gospel threw the divine part and the human part of salvation out of true proportion, to the disparagement of the divine and to the exaltation of the human, it made an exceeding strong and dangerous appeal to the pride and vanity and unstableness of the Galatians. To Paul, who had himself struggled up and out of Pharisaical bigotry and slavery and knew their blinding and blighting power, all of this was utterly intolerable. He knew as it had been given to no other man to know the insidious nature of this heresy, which really destroyed the very essence and spirit of Christianity itself. That he was vilified had little weight with him, only as it had bearings on Christian doctrine. His having to hold the confidence of the Galatians, lest they be "severed from Christ," explains the autobiographical nature of the first two chapters of the book.

What were the racial origin and characteristics of the Galatians?

What is the general subject of the book of Galatians?

State the three main divisions of the book, and the special subject that each division treats.

In what attitude of mind should we always study the Bible?

Who caused the trouble that arose in the churches of Galatia?

State the nature of the error that perverted the Gospel among the Galatians.

How did Paul's religious experience help prepare him to combat this deadly heresy?

Account for the autobiographic nature of the first part of Galatians.

When is a Christian justified in talking about himself?

02.02. ESSAY NO. 2

ESSAY NO. 2

Since the Galatians had been led to doubt Paul's apostolic authority, and as everything depended on it, he confidently affirmed in the first verse that his apostleship, independently of all human intermediaries, derived personally and directly from, "Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." As if to ask, "Can Peter, James, and John have better authority than that?" He deemed this point so important that he made, as we shall see, three arguments, covering about a third of Galatians, to establish it. The salutatory sentence, consisting of five verses, full of elementary Christian doctrine, continues: "Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father." This scripture teaches that the grace and will of God, as executed in Christ, "Who gave himself (the ultimate in giving) a ransom for all," procure for all men who will accept it as God's free gift the threefold blessing of redemption from sin, deliverance from this evil world, and, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding." What a blessing! Where are our tears of gratitude?

God's Two Governments

God's government for humanity from the beginning has always been a theocracy—that is, a monarchy over which God himself is sole and absolute Monarch. However when men rebel against this government, God suffers them, under the leadership of the archrebel Satan, to set up a provisional, secondary government, as he suffered the Jews for a time because of their "hardness of heart" to put away their wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so" (Matthew 19:8). Under Moses, God permitted, as expedients, both divorce and secondary government. Though he has long since abolished the former, he still permits and uses the latter, according to his sovereign will. This primary spiritual government is, "The kingdom of heaven"; these secondary, worldly governments are "the kingdoms of the world." In saying to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." (John 18:36), Christ made a sharp distinction between the two, and made them incompatible. It was these "kingdoms of the world" (Matthew 4:8), in the aggregate that the devil, "the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), and "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), offered Christ. These same kingdoms Paul here calls "this present evil world." Founded in rebellion to God, they all contain the seeds of decay and death within themselves, and as the Bible teaches, God will destroy them as such, after they have served his purpose. "That God may be all in all," this will leave only God's eternal, spiritual kingdom in its solitary grandeur and perfection.

Deliverance "from this present evil world" means much more than remission of sins, or justification, which to us Christians is always a glorious, motivating, past event. Christ tells when and how justification comes: "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment (with the world), but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). We are called out of the world, and are separate from worldlings in life, in death, in resurrection, in

judgment, and in eternal destiny. We are in this world, but as strangers in a land occupied by the enemy. We "are not of this world" even as Christ is "not of this world" (John 17:14). During our sojourn on earth as colonists of heaven, "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence we also wait for a Savior" (Php 3:20). Father Abraham, as a pilgrim of earth seeking "a better country; that is, a heavenly," could have but little interest and part in the God-doomed Canaanitish civilization amidst which he lived a century in tents. Even so are we delivered from unequal yokings with their frustrations, from strivings after wind with their emptiness, from the waste, the brutality, and the desolation which so largely make up "this present evil world." All this gain and freedom on earth, with "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" to come. Who would not be a Christian pilgrim? A Perverted Gospel In Galatians 1:1-24, Galatians 2:1-21 (the personal part), Paul's concern is to restore the Galatians' confidence in him as an authentic apostle, qualified, and sent by God, As we have already seen, Judaizers, had persuaded them that Paul did not preach "the whole counsel of God."

After the salutation, Paul, without defining it, refers to a deadly perversion of gospel doctrine in their midst. Since the heresy strikes at the wisdom and throne of God, the gravity of the situation justifies his strong language: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema (accursed)." Then in the next verse as if to assure them that what he was saying, instead of being the hasty, explosive words of an angry man, were the sober, measured words of a most earnest man, he deliberately spells out the curse again. The Galatians and all men since, therefore, may know that if Gabriel from heaven, or Paul back on earth, should come to preach, they would have nothing to add to what Paul had already preached to them. How the impressible Galatians must have solemnly read on to learn the nature of their error which Paul took so seriously.

Evidently Paul's enemies had said that he was an unprincipled, popularity-seeking opportunist. Evil men by misrepresentations, twisted meanings, and half truths can always make out a case, even when their victim is Christ or Paul. We judge from Paul's reply, "If I were still pleasing men, I could not be a servant of Christ" (v. 10), that his traducers probably said they could sustain their indictment by the fact that he circumcised Timothy, but refused to circumcise Titus, in conformity to policy instead of conscience. For simplicity, compression, and completeness, this answer is an incomparable statement of the immutable, fundamental Christian truth that the interests of men-pleasers and of Christians cannot be reconciled. May we not be thankful that since Christians unto the end of time must suffer similarly, this extreme case of such vile slander and persecution occurred long ago while Paul was still living to make his stabilizing and comforting answer?

Explain the statement that Christ went to the ultimate, in giving.

Whom did Paul call "The god of this world"?

Give the occasion, the issue, and the result of Christ's first recorded personal encounter with this "god."

Name God's two governments on earth, and explain why he needs two.

How did Christ before Pilate distinguish between these governments?

What does Paul mean by his expression, "This present evil world"?

Why does Peter call Christians “sojourners and pilgrims”?

Why could Paul not please both men and God?

Put into your own words the meaning of John 5:24.

02.03. ESSAY NO. 3

ESSAY NO. 3

After at least one return visit to the congregations he had founded in Galatia during his first visit to that district, Paul, busily evangelizing other places, heard that Judaizing wolves, piously alleging that they were better informed than Paul, were working havoc in the Galatian churches.

These designing, false men, "wiser for their own generation than the sons of light," could make out a reasonable case against Paul before the facile Galatians. There is ample evidence in Galatians and the Corinthian letters to show that their chief line of attack was that Paul was only an upstart, inferior apostle, independent of and out of fellowship with the real, original apostles; and that he kept his disciples subordinate to other Christians by withholding from them truth essential to their full development. (Imagine how the proud, hot-headed Galatians would boil at that!) The diabolic cleverness of these "deceitful workers" is better understood when it is remembered that ministers of the old Serpent, who "beguiled Eve in his craftiness" (2 Corinthians 11:3) by persuading her that God was withholding good from her, "also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 11:14) in Corinth, Galatia, Moscow, Rome or Washington to serve the fiendish ends of their demonic master. To overthrow the souls of men, the ministers of the Devil have never needed better strategy than the Father of lies used in Eden.

Paul Explains The small amount of truth in the lying accusations of Paul's detractors made these slanders all the more formidable. By giving the truth that Paul was independent of the real apostles a fatal twist, they had something so plausible, and yet so false, that it could be used against him with deadly effect. At the same time, however it furnished skillful Paul a good occasion to set all fair minded men right on a vital matter.

Paul's explanation is the boldest and fullest statement of his apostolic commission. He concedes, as charged, that he saw none of the apostles before he began preaching, and tells why: "For I made known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it was not after men, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul here reminds the Galatians that the gospel which they heard from him was not of human origin; nor did he acquire it by the customary educational methods of men; but it came to him directly from the risen, living, reigning Lord in heaven. Hence, the conclusion that in apostolic knowledge and authority, he, at least, could not be "a whit behind the very chiefest apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:5) follows inevitably. In the next five verses, to support this affirmation of divine instruction and ordination, Paul shows that he could not have learned of Christ, either before or after his conversion, in an ordinary way. Before, with characteristic energy and zeal he so persecuted "beyond measure . . . the church of God" that no Christian could have even thought of trying to win him. After, instead of going "up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before" him to confer with "flesh and blood," he "went away into Arabia."

Paul in Arabia

Christ said to Paul: "For to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16). Thus, did Christ pledge himself to be Paul's future teacher. Following this initial appearance, five more appearances, selecting fields of labor, encouraging in prison, sustaining in shipwreck, and revealing the future, are recorded in the books of Acts. Furthermore, Paul to prove to the Corinthians that his apostle-ship was bona fide speaks of "visions and revelations of the Lord," and mentions one very special occasion when he was "caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words" (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Now, we know how Paul learned "the deep things of God" which caused Peter to write: Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, write . . . some things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

According to Galatians, part of the three years that elapsed between Paul's conversion and his seeing Peter, Paul spent in Damascus, and the remainder in Arabia. His reason for going to Arabia may be ascertained, I think, with reasonable certainty from Galatians 1:1-24.

Probably the life of no man has ever been so wrecked and so rebuilt as Paul's. Skeptics have always failed as miserably to account for his revolutionized life as for Christ's resurrection. No horizontal line of natural cause and effect can explain it, for it was caused by an original act of super-natural grace, coming down from God. Much vital Christian truth flashed into Paul's mind at the time of his conversion: the despised Nazarene was the Messiah: he had arisen from the dead, and was even now speaking to him from heaven. Dying Stephen had talked with him. Consequently, Paul's life, which he had so laboriously built up to lofty eminence, lay in ashes. Crushing guilt and terror fell upon his soul as he recalled his contempt for Christ and the innocent men and women he had tortured. To learned, successful, proud Paul, Damascus was the loss of everything. All he had prized in life suddenly became mere refuse. But Paul had more to learn and to suffer. God's schooling for his "chosen vessels" includes solitude as attested by Moses in Midian, the Baptist in the wilderness, and John on Patmos. Even so, Paul needed time and quiet for soul work. "The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude." Could there be a fitter place than lonely Arabia and Sinai where fasting Moses received the law and despairing Elijah heard "a still small voice" that made him feel still smaller? Surely, some of Paul's "visions and revelations" came to him in Arabia. To help him understand the Old Testament, the letter of which he had mastered without getting a taste of its spirit, would not the Lord from heaven commune with him and aid him, as he on earth before his death communed with and aided the other apostles? The Bible would soon become to Paul another book. From every page new meanings would leap out at him. Must it not have amazed him exceedingly to realize that he so grossly, and for so long, had missed it all?

Why and how did Paul's enemies slander him in Galatia?

When and how did Paul become an apostle of Christ?

What bearing did the manner of his becoming an apostle have on the attack his enemies made on him?

What promise of future enlightenment did Christ make Paul at the time of his conversion? (See Acts 26:16).

According to the book of Acts, give the occasion and the purpose of some of the five other divine appearances granted to Paul.

Give the circumstances of another miraculous revelation which he experienced. (See 2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

Assign a probable reason for Paul's going into Arabia.

Cite biblical cases to show that "The nurse of full grown souls is solitude."

What revolutionizing changes did Paul's conversion make in him?

02.04. ESSAY NO. 4

ESSAY NO. 4

Even when Paul writes about himself, his self-effacement before God in both nature and religion is apparent. In nature: "God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb"; in religion: "And called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Galatians 1:15-16). In writing about himself, his purpose is ever to glorify God, never himself. Paul felt that God had set him apart, at the very beginning of his life, from all other men as his particular apostle to the Gentiles. He saw no more place for human merit in his religious than in his fleshly life. Both were gifts entrusted from God. "When God gets ready to do something great for fallen man, he begins with a baby." Cosmopolitan Paul surely was a divinely prepared and appointed man unto the apostleship for Gentile nations. How many such appointed servants God now has scattered over the earth is something to think about. "Is anything too hard (or too good) for Jehovah?" (Genesis 18:14). In the closing verses of Galatians 1:1-24, Paul proves that he needs neither instruction nor authentication from other apostles: first, before he saw an apostle, he preached successfully in Damascus (Acts 9:29-35); second, when he first went to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, he saw none of "the twelve" except Peter; and third, after this short, inconsequential visit with Peter he independently executed an extended, fruitful ministry in Syria and Silicia. He might have told the Galatians that he also brought the gospel to them, without further contact with the apostles.

During all these years the churches of Judea, though they had not met Paul, knew the story of his life, "and glorified God in" him. In Paul's writing the Galatians that Judaeen brethren, who had never seen him, thanked God for him, I think I see gentle rebuke and tender pleading for the alienated Galatians, who had known him in closest, personal intimacy, and who had until so recently loved and trusted him fully. Paul was shocked and deeply hurt by their capricious desertion of him and the gospel. Not this human hurt, however, but the fact that "the truth of the gospel" was endangered, accounts for his determination not to compromise the independence of his apostleship.

Paul's object in Galatians 1:1-24, Galatians 2:1-21 is to show that he, individually and independently, received his apostolic commission from Christ after he ascended to his Father, just as the original apostles, collectively, received theirs from him before he ascended. In the first chapter, he boldly affirms that upon this prime fact he stakes his authority as an apostle, gives historical evidence that his work was approved by God, and takes oath ("before God, I lie not") that his affirmation and collateral proof are true. How earnest, positive and final he is about the apostleship being twofold. Now, he is ready in the second chapter to make his second argument, namely, that the church in Jerusalem formally endorsed him as an independent apostle, with a new work from God.

Paul Vindicated in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-10) The unity and fellowship of the church in Antioch, composed largely of Gentile Christians, was soon disrupted by the coming of legalists, "deceitful

men," from Judaea, who taught the necessity of circumcision for Gentile disciples. Inasmuch as this heresy perverted Christianity so as to destroy its very foundation principle, "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them" (Acts 15:2). But it was the wisdom and will of God that this constitutional question pertaining to the all-sufficiency of his grace in Christ should be taken to Jerusalem, where the church began, that "the apostles and the elders, with the whole church" there, guided by the Holy Spirit, should go into the matter thoroughly, and with deliberation and finality hand down a decision once and for all. Consequently, under God's overruling providence, "The brethren (at Antioch) appointed that Paul and Barnabas . . . should go to Jerusalem . . . about this question" (Acts 15:2). (These passages in Galatians and Acts refer to the same occasion, supplement each other, and should therefore be studied together).

Let us now consider the use Paul makes of this divinely prearranged, pivotal meeting in his second argument to establish his independent apostleship. He says that he "went up by revelation" to Jerusalem, taking with him Titus. Titus, being Paul's Gentile fellow-worker who had never been circumcised, would be a test case in the atmosphere to bring out the Christian truth.

Some in the meeting who did not understand how differently grace and law work in the human soul, probably thought that much ado was being made over a small matter, but to Paul, who saw into the heart of things, greatest issues were involved. With him it was a matter of life or death, for if the decision should be circumcision for Titus "the truth of the gospel," Christian liberty, and his years of work among the Gentiles would all be lost. But he so skillfully presented the whole truth and so boldly stood his ground against the troublemakers "privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," that the church decided Titus, having access to all Christian privileges and blessings already, could "press on unto perfection" without being circumcised. Therefore, Christianity, free from restrictions of rite and race, is a universal religion.

Moreover, Paul tells the Galatians that the other apostles imparted nothing- to him. Rather, when they saw that God had entrusted him with the apostleship to the Gentiles as he had Peter with the apostleship to the Jews, and when they saw the grace that was given to him, Peter, James, and John, "They who were reputed to be pillars," gave him and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship." Doubtless the Judaizers in Galatia had said that the leaders in Jerusalem stood with them, but Paul by showing instead that they were with him, turned the tables on them. Paul's vindication and triumph were complete. The perverters of the gospel suffered a crushing defeat. When the church in Antioch, where the question came to a head, heard of the divinely ordained division of the apostleship between Paul and Peter, and other results of the meeting, "they rejoiced for the consolation." Neither Antioch nor Galatia nor any other place of any time or country should have ever been troubled again by the mixture of the systems of law and of grace.

What evidence of Paul's humility and self-effacement do you find in Galatians 1:1-24?

What is Paul's first argument to prove the independence and authenticity of his apostleship?

What was the chief matter considered in the meeting which is reported in Galatians 2:1-10?

Why was this meeting convened at Jerusalem?

Explain the significance of the presence of Titus.

Why did Paul, who circumcised Timothy, resolutely refuse to circumcise Titus on this occasion?

In this meeting who reached what conclusion? (See Acts 15:28-29)

What division of work among the apostles did this meeting recognize?

State Paul's second argument to establish his apostleship, and explain how the events of this meeting support it.

02.05. ESSAY NO. 5

ESSAY NO. 5

Inasmuch as "the truth of the gospel" hangs thereby, Paul lays a broad, deep foundation for his independent apostleship. This foundation consists of three parts: first, he received his apostolic commission directly from heaven; second, the original apostles understood that his apostleship was different from theirs, and gave him full endorsement and fellowship; third, when Peter made a mistake at Antioch, he corrected him. Previous essays have dealt with the first two parts. This essay treats the third part. (Galatians 2:11-18).

Peter's Mistake

Peter's experience in connection with Cornelius, the first heathen Gentile to become a Christian, convinced him that Christ was for all races and cultures of men. When the church in Jerusalem contended with him for eating with "men uncircumcised," he championed the cause of the Gentiles so effectively that the Jews began to accept uncircumcised Christians into the church. A little later, Antioch became the cradle, and still later, the citadel and missionary center, of Gentile Christianity. When Peter visited this great church, he engaged freely in social intercourse with its Gentile members, as was his right and custom, until some rigid legalists, who would impose circumcision on baptized Gentiles, came from Jerusalem. Then, "He drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation." But when Paul "saw that they walked not according to the truth of the gospel," he resisted Peter, the leader, "to the face because he stood condemned" (Galatians 2:12-14). Remarkably strange that Gentile Christians suddenly became unfit associates for Peter! Is there to be one church for Jews and another for Gentiles? The difference between Paul and Peter was not in doctrine, for both spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance." They agreed that Christianity without additions from Moses would make full-grown Christians. But Peter, under pressure of the Judaizers, ceased in Antioch to fellowship Gentiles as he had been doing since Cornelius several years before. He had not changed his faith, however; he only acted as if he had. In doctrine, he stood firm; in conduct, overawed by men, he failed. This was "dissimulation," or hypocrisy.

Here are some things to warn and fortify us all. The fact that all the Jewish brethren in Antioch, including Paul's old and tried friend, Barnabas, (how much sleep did Paul lose over this?) were carried away, shows the mighty power of bad example. And if bold Peter and good Barnabas became hypocrites, for whom is hypocrisy impossible? The base motive, "seeking the favor of men," led these two men of good intentions to disguise their attitude toward the law and to pervert the gospel of grace. "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Proverbs 29:25). Probably, they did not realize that they were hypocrites. And hypocrisy of which its victim is unconscious is the worst form of hypocrisy. For Christians to curry favor of men, from whom their calling certainly and definitely separates them, is, any time and anywhere, perilous.

Peter Corrected

Ever after Cornelius, Peter knew that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but that he freed both religiously from the unbearable yoke of the law, cleansed both by faith in Christ, gave both the Holy Spirit, reconciled "both in one body unto God through the cross having slain the enmity thereby," made "in himself of the two one new man, so making peace," and that both equally had through Christ "access in one Spirit unto the Father." Peter knew too much to be guilty of his conduct, and his slowness to see the implication of his retraction is astonishing. Oh, the weakness and fallibility of even good men! To Peter, who had possessed this vast wealth of unforgettable knowledge (can men forget what they learn by experience?), and had lived accordingly for years, Paul said something like this: "Your ignoring Jewish scruples respecting circumcision, meats, days, and such like, at first, that you might fit smoothly into the life of this Gentile church was your Christian liberty and duty. But your reversing yourself when Judaizers came has involvements of extremely disastrous consequences. Remember, Peter, that you and I in becoming Christians discarded as a means of salvation all our unavailing legal advantages over lawless sinners of the Gentiles, took our place beside them as condemned sinners all, and, since no man can be justified by law, were justified even as they by God's grace through our faith in Christ. Your going back to Moses implies that you are correcting the mistake you made in giving him up for Christ. Do you not see that your conduct will be interpreted as inability of faith in Christ to satisfy human need, and as inadequacy of Christ himself to fulfil the deeper and higher longings and aspirations of the soul? Dear brother, remember your speech in the meeting at Jerusalem. How can you be such a great transgressor as to pervert the gospel and to make Christ a minister of sin?" (See Galatians 2:14-18).

Who, knowing Paul of the Acts and of his epistles can doubt that he reasoned and pleaded wisely, tearfully, and successfully? Who, knowing Peter of the gospels can doubt that he, in bitter weeping and true repentance, was restored to become a better and stronger man than ever? Two big men met in this incident face to face and heart to heart. Peter was good and great enough to acknowledge his mistake when it was made known to him, and to respect and love Paul evermore for the rebuke and correction (See 2 Peter 3:15). Had not the truth of God and the souls of men been at stake, would Paul have written the Galatians about his having corrected Peter? When they read about it, could they still doubt Paul's apostolic knowledge and authority?

Peter was so human—impulsive, energetic, basically honest; an ambitious man of action and magnetic leader of men; a man given to rashness and shrinking from ridicule. His faults were but shadows of his virtues. He always needed a wise friend of deliberate mind and sound judgment for restraint and balance— an eye for his hand. For a few years he had such a friend in Jesus. At Antioch he is in character. Had not Paul saved the situation, would not the caste system have entered the church to rob her of her gospel of pure grace and liberty?

What mistake, that Paul corrected, did Peter make at Antioch?

Did Peter and Paul differ in essential Christian doctrine?

In what did Peter's "dissimulation" consist?

What disastrous consequences would follow his mistake in conduct?

Did Peter realize the deadly nature of his error?

Why do we feel so sure that he knew better than he acted?

Characterize both Peter and Paul as they appear in this occurrence.

What warning should all of us get from the hypocrisy of Peter and Barnabas?

Why did Peter use this occurrence as the third argument to establish his apostolic authority?

Summarize his threefold argument thus far in Galatians to authenticate his apostleship.

02.06. ESSAY NO. 6

ESSAY NO. 6 In Galatians 2:19-21, Paul glides out of his personal rebuke of Peter into a compressed exposition of the fundamentals of Christianity. If these verses, as some think, were not spoken to Peter, nonetheless they explain why Paul was so much concerned about Peter's ceasing to associate with Gentile brethren. They show why he thought Peter's defection under the circumstances forfeited constitutional principles of Christianity and perverted the gospel even unto changing its very heart and pulse beat. This scripture focuses Paul's interpretation of Christianity and furnishes the key to his teaching and life.

Dead to the Law

God's written law through Moses was "holy . . . righteous . . . good . . . spiritual" (Romans 7:12-14), but it was addressed to the flesh, not to the spirit of men. It served its purpose in God's unfolding economy for fifteen centuries, until men were ready for a religion addressed to the spirit. To the obedient, this law promised life; to those who broke it, death. Inasmuch as every Jew without exception broke it, it became to Jews "the ministration of death." Simultaneously, Gentiles without exception, and with the same fatal result, broke God's unwritten moral law. Consequently, Paul's unqualified statement: "By the works of law shall no flesh be justified." Justification by law, good works, character, and merit is utterly impossible. Under the reign of law, through no default of law however, both Judaism and Heathenism failed to justify, and universal condemnation hung over men. Could they justify men, the grace of God and the cross of Christ would be useless (See Galatians 2:21). The gracious Father of mankind, knowing that his human children would not render the perfect obedience that legal justification requires, never intended the covenant of law to be final. Rather, he was giving men an opportunity to learn by their unvarying failure in obedience that under law they were hopeless, doomed sinners. In this manner, men might be led in despair to abandon God's provisional, educative system of law for his perfected system of grace when it became accessible to them.

"I, through the law, died unto the law, that I might live unto God," says Paul. He had to give up all hope of being justified by the law before he could be justified by grace. The covenant of law and the covenant of grace, therefore, cannot run concurrently. God cannot save sinners until they cease trying to save themselves by law and their own merit. There is no need of a man's thinking he can live unto God before he is dead to law as a means of salvation. He must, so to speak, attend his own funeral, "for the old man was crucified with him." A clean break must be made with legality and self-righteousness. The two systems are so different that either annuls the other. The law demands unattainable righteousness while the gospel bestows righteousness upon all who will take it. Though Peter did not realize it, to use legal rites as if they were needed to supply deficiencies of the gospel is to go back to law and self-effort, which inevitably means death. This is to fall "away from grace" and stab Christianity through its heart. That Paul saw the subtle poison of Judaism and the danger to the whole structure of Christianity accounts for his rebuking Peter and writing this warning letter to Galatia. The two systems simply will not mix. "They shall not cleave . . .

. even as iron doth not mingle with clay."

What does Paul's saying, that he "through the law died to the law," mean? He was a breaker of law, subject to God's inexorable decree, "The wages of sin is death." But in amazing grace, Christ took his place as condemned sinner to die for him. Paul felt most poignantly that his sins nailed Christ to the cross and that he himself, not Christ, should have died there. Hence, he means that because God's judgment against his sins was executed upon Christ, he himself died, representatively, on the cross with Christ. Law could not execute him again. (See John 5:24).

Note that not law, but Paul, died. When at Damascus he realized how inhuman, steely, and bloody his years of devotion to the law had left him, he, despairing of ever getting any good from it, fled to the gracious "Jesus of Nazareth," who was unbelievably kind and ready to forgive and forget his terrible past. The law still speaks as sternly and fatally to men in the flesh as ever. Only men who forsake law as the means of salvation (die to it), thus making it possible for them gratefully to accept Christ's vicarious death in lieu of their own, deserved death, can ever escape God's eternal death penalty for breakers of his law.

Alive Unto God In further explaining the practical workings of Christianity, Paul writes: "It is no longer I (the old man born of the flesh) that lives, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I (the new man born of the Spirit) now live in the flesh (bodily frame) I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). Later, from his Roman prison, Paul distilled this into, "For me to live is Christ" (Php 1:20). With respect to his flesh and the world, Paul was born into Christ crucified; with respect to his spirit, he lived a risen, Christ-absorbed life. Before he became a Christian, religion was to Paul a grim, hopeless struggle to please God and improve himself by living up to God's moral code. Upon becoming a Christian he exchanged this ineffectual striving to toe a legal chalk line for a grateful, joyous response of his whole personality to the indwelling Christ, and found "a well of water springing up unto, eternal life." Instead of Christ being a dead man that belonged to the past, he was a living, personal companion, living and working in him. Christianity was to Paul a beautiful, warm, fragrant friendship—a personal experience ("Operation Experience"), "-a divine-human encounter," whereas his religion had been impersonal and traditional. All this sent Paul over land and sea attending to Christ's business as other men were attending to their own business. He lost his life to find it. A Christian is dead to law, sin, flesh, world, and alive to God, to the measure that he really desires to be, but no more. There can be no outer compulsion and no inner reluctance; all must be personal and spontaneous. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

In what sense were both Judaism and Heathenism failures?

Inasmuch as law is "holy, and righteous, and good," and eternal, why is legal justification for men impossible?

In what sense was Paul, when he wrote Galatians, dead to law?

Why cannot a sinner be saved before he is dead to law?

Why cannot sinners be saved by a mixture of law and gospel grace?

In Christian conversion, does law, or the sinner, die?

How does Christ's death deliver breakers of law from their own deserved death?

Can you justify calling Christianity "a divine-human encounter"?, or "Operation Experience"?

Show that Galatians 2:20 is Paul's interpretation of Christianity, and the key to his own life.

02.07. ESSAY NO. 7

ESSAY NO. 7 In these "Studies," we are now leaving, "The apostle of liberty" (Galatians 1:1-24, Galatians 2:1-21), for, "The doctrine of liberty" (Galatians 3:1-29, Galatians 4:1-31).

Paul's Questions

Paul marveled that the Galatians, who had wholeheartedly accepted the gospel when he first went among them, could so quickly embrace "a different gospel"—a gospel so radically and fatally different from the gospel they had received from him that it would not save them. Knowing that they failed to realize the folly and deadliness of the error they were making, he broke out: "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1-3). By these simple, yet discerning questions, Paul hoped to lead the Galatians into seeing that they were under the witchery of blind teachers, and thus to enable them to recover themselves from the infatuation of legalism. To ask the right question in some cases requires more thorough knowledge of the subject, and displays more skill in teaching and exhorting than to make a speech. These questions are still living and apt, and help us get our religion straight. Some Christians, since they fall into the Galatian heresy of thinking they can be "perfected in the flesh," are in range of these explosive questions which Paul shot at the Galatians. If Peter needed Paul's rebuke, who may not need it?

Inasmuch as the body of every Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), Paul felt no need of asking even these recent converts from heathenism whether or not they had the Spirit. But in order that they might better understand the difference between the basic working principles of grace and law, and their irreparable loss in going back to law, his inquiry focused on the truth that God gave them the Holy Spirit at the same time, and for the same reason, that he gave them remission of sins (Acts 2:38). "He that supplieth the Spirit to you, and worketh miracles among you, doth he do it by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:5). God gives his Spirit to all who obey the gospel (Acts 5:32), but not to men who choose to remain under law, for the death penalty of all breakers of law rests upon them. Upon this grand gospel truth, Paul built an argument to the Galatians, which he expected to convince them of the absurdity, blunder, and sin of thinking they could be "perfected in the flesh."

These provocative questions help to an understanding of some things, namely: men become Christians and receive the Holy Spirit, not by law and works, but by grace and faith; God freely gives both "remission of sins" and "the gift of the Holy Spirit" to men when they obey the gospel; for Christians to rely on law and self-effort for justification and sanctification is to give up Christ, the Holy Spirit, and grace altogether. Justification "is of faith that it may be according to grace" (Romans 4:16). Grace and faith are correlates and imply each other. Grace and works are antipodes and exclude each other. Grace nullifies law, and faith nullifies meritorious works. As light expels darkness, so grace expels "works of law."

Imbedded in this argument pertaining to Christian doctrine is another question: "Did ye suffer so many things in vain? If it be indeed in vain." According to Acts 14:1-28, Paul and his Galatian converts were bitterly persecuted by both Jews and Galatians at the beginning of the gospel in Galatia. His readers had experienced much suffering—too much to get no gain, for there should be great moral value in suffering. "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." "Through tribulation to triumph" is Christian doctrine. On the principle that they already had too much invested to forfeit, Paul exhorted: "Cast not away therefore your boldness which hath great recompense of reward" (Hebrews 10:25). After this forceful appeal, he, wistfully pleading, trailed off more winsomely still, "if it be indeed in vain."

Prevalence of Legalism

Legalism and human works hold a strange enchantment over poor man's proud, self-sufficient heart. They have ever inspired the enmity of the flesh and of the world against the gospel of God's grace. It is to be feared that Christendom today is largely legalized rather than Christianized. Man, used to acquiring things by work and accustomed to working for things in proportion to the value which he puts on them, correctly thinks that salvation from sin and peace with God are of superlative worth, and therefore reasons that he must expend correspondingly great effort in order to secure them. How false such reasoning! How empty such labor! "The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain." Christianity uniquely gives for the asking these priceless benefits—benefits that men with all their wisdom, asceticism and strivings can neither earn, merit, nor get elsewhere gratuitously. Men can scarcely believe that so much can be had for nothing. It is contrary to all human thinking and experience; it is too good and too great to be true. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Abraham's Religious Experience (Galatians 3:6-9)

Thus far in the chapter, Paul has reasoned with the Galatians from their own experience. Now, he reasons from the experience of Abraham. Probably the Judaizers in Galatia falsely, though tellingly, taught that to be righteous before God men must, like Abraham and his descendants including Christ, be circumcised. Paul quoting from Genesis 15:6 answers: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Elsewhere, he shows that this took place before Abraham received circumcision as "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which" he had while he was in uncircumcision" (Romans 4:11). After thus smashing the false reasoning, Paul continues to the Galatians: "Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are the sons of Abraham ... So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham." For Abraham, faith in God was equivalent to righteousness, and faith like Abraham's, "who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16), is equivalent to righteousness for all his spiritual sons.

What action on the part of the Galatians was so unreasonable that Paul asked them who had bewitched them?

How may Christians be guilty of such folly today?

How did Galatians come into possession of the Holy Spirit?

Do Christians still possess the Holy Spirit?

What two blessings are promised to Christians on the same conditions in Acts 2:38? (See Acts 5:32 also).

Can you explain why legalism so fascinates mankind?

Explain Paul's statement that justification "is of faith that it may be according to grace" (Romans 4:16).

What is the difference between being legalized and being Christianized?

How was Abraham justified before God? Who are now "sons of Abraham"?

02.08. ESSAY NO. 8

ESSAY NO. 8

Galatians 3:1-14 comprises four short pithy arguments in support of Christianity as a means of salvation contrasted with law. The first argument, built on the experience of the Galatians, and the second, built on the experience of Abraham, have been considered. The third, built on Hebrew scripture, and the fourth, built on Christ's substitutionary death, are now to be studied.

"It Is Written"

Three verses (Galatians 3:10-12) contrast legal works and gospel faith as the only two conceivable ways by which men may attain unto righteousness and life. The argument runs: since no man ever has rendered, or ever can render, the perfect obedience to "all things that are written in the book of the law" which righteousness by means of law requires, no man can escape God's curse of death on law breakers. Faith is, therefore, the sole way of life. The two ways cannot co-exist, nor can they be combined. Gospel faith is not primarily faith in acts of obedience, but faith in Christ's death for our sins. Paul reached this same conclusion in his first sermon in the Galatian country years before he wrote Galatians: "By him (Christ) everyone that believeth is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).

Inasmuch as the little sentence, "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4) is worked into the great doctrinal epistles of Romans (Romans 1:17) and Hebrews (Hebrews 10:38) as well as into Galatians, it must hold cardinal Christian doctrine. Taken in its contexts, it teaches not only that men are justified by faith, but also that they must continue to live, suffer, and grow by faith, not by works. The fact that the Galatians after beginning in faith were falling into works of law was the cause of Paul's writing them this sharp, warning letter. Ever since Eden, true religion on the human side has always been based on faith in God. Although Abraham demonstrated his faith by sacrificing Isaac, and Paul his by being baptized, their faith was essentially the same. Who can doubt that Abraham would have been baptized had God commanded him to be? Because of this continuum of faith in God, the entire Bible is one organic whole. The Old Testament anticipates the New and kindles the fire of redemption that burns and blazes throughout the New.

"It Is Finished"

Before "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ," men, Jews and Gentiles alike, were inevitably and universally doomed because they were under law. "But Christ redeemed us (Christians) from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Before Christ died, there was only one class of men, namely, men condemned to death. His dying created the possibility of another class coming into existence. Condemned men who believe that God in free grace will accept Christ's vicarious death in lieu of their deserved death and act accordingly come out from among lost men into a new class, namely, justified men. These are they, who realizing their doomed state and feeling keenly their inability to change it under law, come, with no plea but, "Be thou merciful to me a sinner," and accept God's gracious,

judicial decree to deliver them from the sentence of death and to treat them as if they had never been sinners. A justified man "com-eth not into judgment (with men who remain under law), but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

Such is Christian justification. Christ's, "It is finished" from his cross signified that the means for justifying condemned humanity was perfected, and that addition from "the flesh" or "will of man," as the Galatians were attempting, could but pervert and ruin it. Think you not that such a great justification should put an end to self, and that God has a moral right to expect Christians, out of sheer gratitude, to be "zealous of good works?" This is the place and the manner in which good works come into Christianity. The Purpose of the Law

Since Abraham possessed the faith upon which salvation depends, why did not God give him immediately, instead of the promise of Christ's coming, Christ himself? And why was the covenant of law necessary at all? The last half of Galatians 3, very simple and directly, considers such things. By his oath, God confirmed his promise to Abraham that in his seed (Christ) all nations should be blessed, "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong encouragement" (Hebrews 6:18). No matter what time might elapse or what events intervene before its fulfillment, this promise so confirmed, could never in any manner whatsoever be altered. After 430 years, God supplemented this immediate, personal promise to Abraham by a covenant of law, which was in a roundabout way "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator (Moses)," and which was to last only "till the seed should come to whom the promise" was made. This "till" shows that the covenant of law was to be but a temporary, provisional insertion within the longer, larger covenant of promise. It neither superseded nor opposed the prior promise, which was to be fulfilled after the transitory, legal covenant had passed away. The Abrahamic covenant with its positive emphasis on promise and faith, inadequately emphasized sin and its curse. The Mosaic covenant with its heavy emphasis on sin and death was needed to attain the proper moral balance, and was therefore "added because of transgressions." Is it not meaningful that, though provision was made for six tribes to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless and the other six on Ebal to curse the people after they had crossed the Jordan and assembled in Canaan, in the actual history not a single blessing was heard, but twelve curses with all the people answering "amen" were pronounced? (Deuteronomy 27:1-26). Could there be a better commentary on Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the law are under a curse"? As there can be no trespassing without a boundary, so, though sin exists, it does not take the character of transgression and rebellion, and "is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). "The law came in besides that the trespass might abound" (Romans 5:20). "Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Though the Sinaitic covenant served other purposes too, its prime purpose was to discover wounds for which it had no healing that men might seek the great Physician when he came in fulfillment of the promise of Abraham.

What grand truth are the four arguments in Galatians 3:1-14 used to prove?

Give the substance of the last two of these arguments.

Was the covenant of law intended to save men finally?

What was the prime purpose of the religion of law, given through Moses?

Cite the four places in the Bible where the expression, "The righteous shall live by his faith," is found. Comment on the fullness of meaning Paul gives this expression in his writings.

How did Christ's death make a new class of man on earth possible?

What do Christ's words from the cross, "It is finished," signify?

Why can they not mean that He would never do anything more for men?

Where and how do "good works" come into Christianity?

02.09. ESSAY NO. 9

ESSAY NO. 9

Between the promise to Abraham and its fulfillment in Christ, God gave the law through Moses in order to teach man that under law, which required him to earn his justification by his own doing, he was a lawbreaker, condemned to death. This universal, perpetual human failure was supposed to shatter man's religious faith in himself, and to prepare him to accept justification as a gift procured by the doing of another. Herein lies the chief advantage of Christianity over Mosaism. Were Christianity just another law for man to keep, still he would fail.

"God Is One" As the foundation of Jewish religion, Moses taught that "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Even men without the Bible have so much evidence in nature that they are without excuse, if they do not see the unity, power, and infinite goodness of God, the Maker and Governor of all (Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20). When God promised old, childless Abraham an innumerable progeny to occupy, centuries later, a land three or four times as large as Texas, he was pleased to grant Abraham the assurance he asked. At God's direction, Abraham divided some animals into halves and laid the pieces opposite each other with a passageway between. From time immemorial when two or more parties made an important covenant, they, to seal the compact, walked together along such a passageway. God used this, then, ancient, familiar ceremony as Abraham's pledge. But very singularly only a flaming torch, representing God, passed between the pieces of the offering. The reason Abraham did not so pass was twofold: first, he was only the recipient of a free promise and was not himself promising anything; second, the relationship between the two was so personal, unifying, and binding that any difference between them, needing a mediator to compose, was impossible. "Abraham my friend" (Isaiah 41:8), was God's own characterization of this remarkable man. To his friends, the promise of the great "I am that I am" (Exodus 3:14), is always, in both natural and religious matters, enough.

Both the circumstances under which and the manner in which the temporal Mosaic covenant was made preclude the idea that it was to supersede the Abrahamic covenant. Despite all that God had done for them in Canaan, Egypt, and the wilderness, over a period of 430 years, the Hebrews utterly failed to understand and appreciate God's promise to Abraham. Moreover, they were so far from realizing their great distance from God and the depth of their depravity that the indirect, parenthetical, legal covenant, with its mere angelic ministry and human mediator, became necessary to reveal to them their miserable moral condition.

Since in God's promise to Abraham only one party was bound, there could be no mediator to arrange terms between two parties. But in the inferior Mosaic covenant much mediatorial work was required. Moses made three up-and-down trips between the people at the base and God at the summit of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1-25). Even after the people in ignorance and conceit had lightly answered Moses, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do," Moses toiled up and down the rugged mountain twice more, cooperating with God to solemnize and sanctify the occasion, to

deepen the people's sense of sin and separation from God, and to lead them to make their side of the contract profoundly religious and sacred. But even so, they had scarcely agreed to the terms of the covenant before they flagrantly broke it with their golden calf. So much for men under law, flesh, and self.

All this underlies Paul's reasoning with the Galatians when he says of the Sinaitic covenant: "It was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." In dealing with each other, God and his sons are not two parties, requiring the services of a mediator. Christians are so incorporated into Christ's personality, so instinct with his life that one nature serves the whole Christian organism—head and body alike. They are so surrendered to Christ, so identified with Christ, and so absorbed into Christ that, with all differences and discords silenced, Christ and his friends (John 15:15) become one party, with all need of human mediation forever eliminated. What else can Christ's high priestly prayer to his Father, "That they may all be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one" (John 17:22-23) mean? Paul thought this reasoning should show the Galatians their folly and sin in thinking that the law could add anything to God's everlasting promise to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ. He hoped it would crush their legality, completely and permanently. Can Christians, now, but learn and yield themselves to the truth that God through Christ in the Spirit takes them to his great fatherly heart in a gracious, loving, friendly, personal oneness, they will have the only way of pressing "on unto perfection" that infinite wisdom, power, and love provide.

Law As A Jailor

Because all men are foolish and slow of heart to believe that law never makes alive, but ever kills, Paul, to his beloved Galatians, yearningly lingers over this vital truth. In the last of Galatians 3:1-29, he represents law as a jailor who herds all men into a vast house of death, and securely locks them in. Man is truly a sinner by nature. When he knows but little law, he is a slave to his unbridled flesh. Since "the power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56), when he knows law he becomes a rebel, therefore a greater sinner, by breaking it. Verily, law is a huge jailor who has men fast confined in his great jail till—"Till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made." Law, therefore, with his massy, iron key of sin, curse, and death shuts all in his prison till grace comes with her golden key of faith, justification, and life to open doors for all who, to their imprisonment, prefer freedom. Why do doomed men even hesitate to accept deliverance from sin by God's unmixed grace and their unmixed faith! The final teaching of the chapter is that Christianity is a universal religion, without restrictions of race or rite. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek . . . bond nor free ... no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." This does not mean, of course, that Christianity obliterates distinctions in races, social status, and sex, but that, ignoring such things, it offers equal blessings and opportunities to all human beings alike.

Were Christianity but another covenant of law, could men be saved under it?

Under what law do heathen peoples always live?

What should heathens, without a written law, know about God?

What did Abraham's not passing between the rows of divided animals in the sacrifice signify?

Did the Mosaic covenant counterwork the Abrahamic covenant?

Explain, in its context, Galatians 3:20.

What does the figure of the jailor teach?

How are prisoners delivered from their imprisonment?

What is to be learned from the last verses of Galatians 3:1-29 about the segregation of races?

02.10. ESSAY NO. 10

ESSAY NO. 10

Thus far in the doctrinal portion of Galatians the following' points stand out prominently: first, "The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" is the distinctive and unique possession of all Christians; second, since God's absolute promise to Abraham was that all nations should be blessed through him, the law, which was given to Jews only, chiefly to demonstrate that they were inveterate transgressors of the law, cannot be the fulfillment of the ancient promise of worldwide blessing; third, inasmuch as every man fails to live up to law. he is under God's curse of death, "kept in ward under the law shut unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed"; fourth, the Jewish Scriptures themselves declare that, "The righteous shall live by his faith," not by his self-righteousness.

All Jews were inexorably condemned by the moral laws of Moses, but, lest they lose heart and in utter despair give up the law altogether, their hope was fostered by the pictorial gospel in its types and symbols. Despair is good, when it becomes creative, as God intends it should, and leads sinners, under the conviction that law has no help for victims of lawlessness, to Christ. The Law As Tutor

"The law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Simultaneously, the law was both jailor and tutor. It offered tutorial instruction and guardianship to the imprisoned Jews; but incarceration and tutorage were to continue only until Christ, who would set them free and lift them out of bondage and pupilage into son-ship and inheritance. In the very nature of things, a tutor is for the immature, whose maturity will render the tutor, because his work is done, unnecessary. "But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor. For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus ... ye are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:25-29).

Man's passing from law (the Mosaic covenant) to faith (the Christian covenant) shifts the emphasis from human to divine activity. Under law, men try to do something to win divine favor, and thus earn justification by their own doing. Under faith, God does something to win the favor of men, that they may trust him and accept a justification that is based on his doing. This forever separates the two covenants. Under faith, instead of men's being justified by what they do for themselves, or do for Christ, they are justified by what Christ does for them. Under law, each man is for himself. He is safe only, if he does "all things that are written in the book of the law." If he sins, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Under law, no provision is made for a justification that is procured by another. Since man was bruised and put under a curse in Eden, Christianity is the only religion he has known that properly proportions divine and human activity. In this all-important matter, all other religions, being falsely pivoted, are fundamentally wrong and fatally perverted. To lead men to think they can weave these two contradictory systems together is probably the devil's masterpiece of ingenuity, malice, and success. Paul advised a certain course for the church at Corinth, "that no advantage be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). But are not some Christians today ignorant of his devices? It seems men can never learn

that, "If the inheritance is of law, it is no more of promise"; that justification is not something earned by keeping law, but that it is a free gift of God's grace. This attempt to combine the two covenants was the trouble in Galatia long ago. Is it not a prevalent trouble in the church today? Fallen man has naturally a Judaizing bias. Why do we, as if we mistrusted God's promise to Abraham, made good to us in Christ, persist in trying to add the principle of law to the principle of faith? We must never forget that the road to heaven not only begins in faith, but also continues all the way "from faith unto faith," never once shifting into the works of the flesh. Who can know how much Christ has been in the past, or is now, being straitened in the house of his friends by this insidious, satanic device?

"Baptized into Christ"

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). This verse tells how men become "sons of God, through faith." A few years after Gentile Cornelius and his house became Christians, Peter said that God "made no distinction between us (Jews) and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Now turn to Acts 10:1-48, Acts 11:1-30 to see what occurred when their hearts were so cleansed. An angel said to Cornelius: "Fetch . . . Peter; who shall speak unto thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house" (Acts 11:13-14). After Peter came, and while he was speaking the "words" that would save, the falling of the Holy Spirit upon his listeners suddenly interrupted him. But after the interruption, he finished his saving "words." Their faith in Christ led the Gentiles to repent and to be baptized in obedience to Peter's command. The fact that Peter said not one word about the Holy Spirit proves that the Spirit's coming was no part of Peter's "words." God sent the Spirit, not to save Cornelius, but to convince Christian Jews that Christ was for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Thus, was Cornelius justified and cleansed by his faith as it obeyed. This way of cleansing hearts has never been, nor is it ever to be, changed, for Christ's last charge to his apostles was: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). In this manner, fulfilling God's ancient promise made to Abraham before there were any Jews, are Jews, Romans, Galatians, and all humanity to be saved. An actor, taking the part of Hamlet, tries to impersonate and reproduce him. Similarly, to "put on Christ" is, first, to put him on in baptism, then "follow his steps" and always be like him. According to the Bible and human experience too, the way for us really to get Christ on and be clothed in him is to let him, through the Holy Spirit, dwell in us, and take over our lives. Other ways get very imperfect likeness, and easily lead into pride, pretense, and hypocrisy. Said Christ: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

Explain how the Mosaic law served as a tutor.

What was the nature and the use of the pictorial gospel?

What shift was made in religious center in the transition from Judaism to Christianity?

Are men reconciled to God by their own endowments and workings?

Show that Christianity begins and ends in faith, never once shifting into meritorious works.

How does Satan work so very effectively against Christians?

Cite a biblical case of Christian conversion to show how a sinner's heart is cleansed by faith.

Show by Peter's sermon to Cornelius and the accompanying events, what the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for and what it is for.

In what manner and with what results do men "put on Christ"?

02.11. ESSAY NO. 11

ESSAY NO. 11

Paul begins Galatians 4:1-31 by tying up what he had just taught in the third. Jews "were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world," until, fulfilling his promise to Abraham, God sent his eternal Son, true man and seed of Abraham however, born of human mother, capable of dying under the law in lieu of the death of actual law-breakers; sent him to be "the end (both aim and the termination) of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Romans 10:4), to redeem men from the status of child and ward, and to promote them to sons and heirs—in short, to lift them out of slavery into acknowledged sonship and liberty. That Gentiles, who had been strangers to the house, as well as Jews, who had been minors in the house, were so exalted is shown by Paul's again reminding the Galatians that they had received the Holy Spirit, which is the peculiar seal of Christianity: "And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Strangers and minors, having but "the spirit of bondage," could cry only "Master," never, "Father, Father."

"Rudiments of the World"

Why did Paul call the Mosaic covenant "the rudiments of the world . . . the weak and beggarly rudiments"? Although the law itself was holy and spiritual, the legal system in which it was imbedded was a religion of the flesh. It was addressed to the flesh, which "lusteth against the Spirit" (Galatians 6:18); it made its appeal to the natural man, who "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Religious legal systems are for the morally immature. All of them, Jewish and heathen alike, are built upon the elementary principles that underlie natural religion and civil government—the rudimentary principles upon which the Christ-less world, religiously and socially, has ever been, and is, run. The Jews had in written form a much fuller revelation of God's law than did heathen nations, but they broke it, even as Gentiles broke the law they knew. Knowing that his legal anchor would never hold in the mud bottom of the human mind, God was merely using it as preparation for the gospel preached "beforehand unto Abraham" (Galatians 3:8). The Sinai covenant, though adapted to the minority of the Jews, was too weak and poor to bring to maturity the spiritual, Godlike possibilities of men. Something stronger and richer than "weak and beggarly" legalism and ritualism, were all nations to be blessed, was required. Therefore God from all eternity, was graciously building a religion fitted to lead men into obeying his immutable law of life, that they might live abundantly and eternally. Did not Christ tell the woman at "the well (John 4:1-54), that the time had come for the spiritual religion, promised from of old, that would reach man's inmost spirit, qualify him to "worship in spirit and truth," and "become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life"?

Legalism Becomes Heathenism

After referring to their former heathen life, Paul says to the Galatians: "But now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly

rudiments, where-unto ye desire to be in bondage again"? All Judaizers in the church, ancient and modern, magnify man's side of redemption, works of law, and human merit to the disparagement of God's side, works of grace, and human demerit. Because the Galatians were being led into this deep, beguiling error, Paul very emphatically reminds them that their conversion from slavish heathenry began with God's knowing them, rather than with their knowing God. He is amazed and alarmed at their deserting Christian ground, and fears that he has labored with them in vain. He must by all means show them the real nature of the terrible mistake they are making—that religiously to observe Mosaic rites after the cross is to deny the efficacy of the gospel of grace, to relapse into "bondage over again," and to give up Christ altogether. This deceptive tare, if let alone, will supplant Christianity; hence, Paul digs it up by the roots.

What could be more startlingly instructive than this identification of heathenry with the Mosaic system after its tutorship was accomplished? When the Galatians, who had never known Moses, observed circumcision and other "carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation," it was the same in principle as if they had returned to heathen idolatry with its impure rites, abominable obscenity, and demon worship. Both systems were based on the rudimentary principles of the flesh and "the wisdom of the (Christ-less) world," which can never lift men higher than the flesh and the world. According to Galatians, Mosaism after the cross has the same deadly effect on men that heathenism has.

Current Galatianism The core of the Galatians' default was they thought the gospel Paul preached was "weak and beggarly." They were so spiritually shallow and ignorant that they thought the Christian life could not be attained on the principle of divine grace kindling and working with human faith, love, and hope; that the gospel needed to be bolstered up and made sufficient by adding the principle of law. (A very common error today.) It was incidental that they manifested this crass misunderstanding of the power and the working of grace in the human spirit by observing Mosaic rites and ceremonies. The basic error of the Galatians was their thinking that, not grace and faith, but law with its immature, not to say infantile, methods was the dynamics of righteousness. Now, the grand object of the book of Galatians was to show them that it was the other way around—that the principle of law was provisional, "weak and beggarly," while within the church was the full-grown power of God, "wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Of course, Christians today do not show their mistrust of the working principle of Christianity by taking up the ways of Moses, but they may easily show it in other ways. Just to name some: trust in blood, wealth, culture, position, ability to sing or speak, strong character, good works, dead forms, traditions of men, and creeds, written and unwritten. Note how the book relies on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2-5, Galatians 4:6, Galatians 5:16-26), a new power inaccessible to men until Pentecost, to counteract the fleshly workings of all these. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" and unity and growth and fruit.

State the twofold sense in which Christ "is the end of the law unto righteousness."

When and why does God send the Holy Spirit into men's hearts?

Why did Paul call the Mosaic covenant "weak and beggarly rudiments" of the world?

Study the statement that the Sinai covenant was a parenthesis within the older, broader, more enduring Abrahamic covenant.

When and how did Judaism become no better in principle than heathen idolatry?

How was it that the Galatian heresy deserted Christian ground altogether?

Explain the statement that not the law itself, but the covenant of law, was a “ministration of death.”

Show that Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman throws light on the nature of the connection between Judaism and Christianity.

What dynamic power, inaccessible to all others, do Christians have to counteract carnal, legalistic tendencies?

02.12. ESSAY NO. 12

ESSAY NO. 12

"Men spake from God being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Even without this personal impact of the Holy Spirit upon his own spirit, Paul would have been a very superior man. With his large natural and acquired gifts, wealth of experience, and devotion to God, he was capable of holding more of the mind of God than were others. Consequently, when moved, filled, and possessed by the Spirit, he not only taught some things more fully than other inspired men did, but withal became the most vital and fruitful man in history. The biography of a good man, from Christ down, is always profitable. When others know a man's motive is right, they like to hear him tell his own life story. Paul, knowing that the narrative of a Christian's conversion and subsequent life was good argument for Christianity, on two occasions related his own experience (Acts 22:1-30, Acts 26:1-32). To make and to develop Christians there is no better preaching and exhorting than what the Spirit "moved" Paul to write about himself.

Paul's "Little Children"

(Galatians 4:12-20)

Paul feared that the Galatians might misconstrue some of the plain, frank things he had written, and even misjudge his motives. Apparently the Judaizers had maligned him and caused them to think he was their enemy, purposely depriving them of necessary rites. When he thought of how the simple Galatians were being imposed upon by the designing partisans, memories of their unprecedented reception of him, a very sick man, when he first came among them, compassion for their distressed state under hireling shepherds, and perplexity concerning their future filled his heart, and he grew tender and tearful.

Probably what he wrote Corinth about the same time, under similar circumstances, "Out of many afflictions and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4), would be appropriate in a second letter to Galatia. Or perhaps, what he said to Philippi, "Many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Php 3:18), he might have said to Galatia. Contrary to Paul's custom, no thanksgiving is found in Galatians, but it contains one of the tenderest passages in all his writings: "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you—but I could wish to be present with you now, and change my tone; for I am perplexed about you." Note that the connection between the two verses of this emotionally drenched passage is broken as if by sobs. This introduces a side of Paul and a basic element in Christianity, also, that we today know none too well. If Christ could weep in human sympathy over the broken image of God in the Jews, with the sisters at the tomb of their brother, and pronounce a blessing upon those who mourn, there can be nothing wrong or weak about tears. Paul, whose commission was signed, "I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16), became a man of profound feeling and many tears before his martyrdom. What better reveals a man's size than that which moves him to tears? As the

foundation of the church was cemented in Christ's blood, and the superstructure built in the persecutions and afflictions of the saints, so must the building be finished in the sufferings and the sacrifices of Christians.

Love and tears have a ministry peculiarly their own. What can be more eloquent and moving than the tears of a strong man, like Moses or Paul, who does not weep till he has something to weep about? A wayward son can withstand the arguments of his father longer than he can the tears of his mother. If Euodia and Syntyche could have got off to themselves somewhere and had a good cry together, probably, their difference would not have seemed so important (Php 4:2). When Christ (Matthew 22:37-40) and Paul (1 Corinthians 13:1-13) so certainly give dominant centrality in the kingdom of God to love, it is hard to see why Christians consider it, as compared to intellect and learning, inferior. The church, leaving hearts unexercised and trying to do God's work with only heads and hands, breaks step with Christ and Paul. The only fault Christ found with the church at Ephesus was that she had left her "first love" (Revelation 2:4).

Paul's Allegorizing

After closing his argument for the all-sufficiency of the gospel with a touching reminiscence, Paul, feeling that more written doctrinal matter would be useless to the Galatians, tells them that he would like to talk things out with them face to face and heart to heart. Wondering whether or not they really understand how promise and law differ in nature and workings, and realizing how easy it is to confess Christ, yet rely on self, Paul, knowing the value of parabolic illustrations to clarify doctrine, decides, before taking up the hortatory part of the book proper, to use Abraham again to allegorize the difference.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law (legal system), do ye not hear the law (book of the law)?" Very skillfully, Paul commits the Judaizers to their own Bible before he shows that it is against them. "Moved by the Holy Spirit," Paul says of Hagar and Sarah, "These women are two covenants." He teaches that Ishmael, Abraham's natural son by Hagar, symbolizes and allegorizes the Mosaic covenant; and that Isaac, Abraham's supernatural son by Sarah, the Christian covenant. As Ishmael, because he mocked Isaac, was cast out, so Jews, because they reject Christ, mocking and persecuting his people, must be cast out. These women with their respective sons were no more incompatible than are the two covenants. Sons of the flesh cannot abide sons of the Spirit. No one hates grace like those who try to save themselves by self-effort. The point of the allegory contained in this bit of history is that God casts out the legal mode of earning justification, and freely bestows it upon "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." The prophecy Paul quotes, since it shows Isaiah as well as Moses is against them, further embarrasses Judaizers. Furthermore, it gives Christians of all time assurance that they are on the growing, winning side. Paul proves himself to be an elegant, effective allegorizer.

Galatians is the Act of Emancipation for the slaves of law in all ages. It defends the gospel against any invasion of the principles of law, works, and flesh, which would modify its character of pure grace. It is the Magna Charta of Christian universalism and liberty and freedom.

Why is there no thanksgiving in the book of Galatians?

Why are the autobiographic notes sprinkled over Paul's writings so interesting and edifying?

How do we know that tears are neither wrong nor weak?

How do you account for the modern intellectual recoil against emotional demonstration?

What position do Christ, Paul and John assign love in Christianity?

Why cannot all of God's work be done with heads and hands?

What do you think of the efficacy of the ministry of love and tears?

What allegorical lesson, based on the story of Isaac and Ishmael, does Paul teach?

Elaborate on the statement that Galatians is the Act of Emancipation for slaves of law in all ages.

02.13. ESSAY NO. 13

ESSAY NO. 13 In Galatians 5:1-26, Galatians 6:1-18 especially, Paul exhorts his readers to apply his teaching by giving the doctrine of sanctification (personal, practical righteousness) by grace an honest trial. In effect he says something like this: "Your false teachers tell you that, unless the principle of law is woven in with the principle of grace, the moral standards of the church will suffer, and the highest type of Christians will not be produced. But I, Paul, (with all my apostolic knowledge and authority, which was proved in the first of this letter), tell you that the workings of grace alone will sanctify as well as justify men; and that any admixture of the legal principle will fatally pervert it." Paul insists -and warns that the two systems being "contrary, the one to the other" will not coalesce, but that pure, unmixed grace will sustain standards, fulfill the law, and make Christians of the highest order.

Christ the Emancipator

"For freedom did Christ set you free." "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant (slave) of sin ... If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:34-36). If men are left in Adam's sin and their own sins, being slaves of sin by nature and by practice, imprisoned in themselves their doom is eternally sealed. The story of the Negro slave who, upon being sold by a brutal master, heard his new master graciously say, "My purpose in buying you is to set you free," illustrates Christ's freeing men. Christian freedom is not incidental; Christ's purpose in buying enslaved men is to make them free. "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom" (Galatians 5:13). "I am the door; by me if man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out (freedom of a child in and around the house of its parents), and shall find pasture ... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:9-10). In these simple words, Christ offers men, in the language of another, "freedom, fodder, and fullness."

"Be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." Could the Negro man, after being free for a time, return to his former, hard master? Yet, this is what the Galatians were doing, Their being circumcised and building hope on the law, nullified grace as though "Christ died for naught," and made them debtors "to do the whole law." Thus, they were being ensnared again in the network of legalism, for Judaism, like the heathenism from which Christ had delivered them, was also a legal system—a "ministration of death." To be thus circumcised was to reinstate law, which was powerless either to prevent or forgive sin. It was to be "severed from Christ" and "fallen away from grace" altogether.

Christians today without falling into Judaism, heathenry, or gross sins, may nonetheless fall "away from grace" into an entanglement of dead formality, Pharisaic self-righteousness, and Christless human merit, "holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof"—form without power. In principle, this is the same deadly perversion of the gospel that filled Paul with apprehension for his "little children" in Galatia, and led him tearfully to warn them that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." May not this powerless form of religion be a termite, now eating out the inner, spiritual life and strength of the church, leaving a hollow, outer shell to collapse

later? Christ said to his church in Sardis: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Revelation 3:1). Sardis must have been bustling with committees, programs, and various activities, a church much alive and gratifying to the flesh, but dead to Christ. Could his church today be drifting into such a state?

Freedom and Obedience

Freedom is not free; nor can it ever be had at a bargain price. It may be possessed only at the same, original, high price. Like peace and happiness, it is not to be sought directly, but as a by-product. Obedience, not freedom, is the primary law of life. When a carnal man seeks freedom by flouting law and authority and by living as he pleases, he soon finds himself physically and morally enslaved. But when men live in obedience to the laws of life, freedom follows as a shadow follows its objects. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things (including freedom) shall be added unto you." Seek freedom first, and it escapes. Men are free only within bounds—within the frame of law. They are chained back in freedom by law; and the more lawful, the freer men are.

Christian freedom has both a negative and a positive aspect. Men are freed from some things and freed for other things. Christ liberates men from the yoke of traditional, creedal and ceremonial law, for it chokes the freedom he proposes to give. He frees men from the curse of the moral law—from the penalty, power and practice of sin; and from the fear of self, the world, death and hell. Men who fear God rightly, know no other fear. On the positive side, Christianity brims with freedom, Christ gives men the liberty to search the Scriptures with open, yet cautious mind, and in free conscience to accept what they find. Christianity is on the way to dissolution when Christians are afraid to follow their conscience. In Christ men have liberty and privilege to worship, to work, to ponder, to wonder, to wait and dream, to do the right thing, to grow and ripen, to "press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and to go on endlessly with God unto perfection even as He is perfect. Verily freedom, unto speechless wonderment, "above all that we ask or think!" The secret of Christian freedom is that a Christian chooses to go Christ's way. He believes that since Christ's and his own interests are identical, either both are served or neither is served ; that Christ's will for him is his own will at its highest and best. Therefore, when he chooses Christ's way, he also has his own way. And what is this but freedom? It is the blessed freedom of a Christ-captivated soul — a new kind of slavery, to be sure. But inasmuch as man by purposive creation is a dependent being, the more dependent, the more fulfilled and freer he is. God has worked out a unique plan by which Christ's slave becomes his own master! Christ gets the essential law of life obeyed, human nature fulfilled, and his slave in possession of life abounding — all this without slavish drudgery or "dragging of feet" on the part of the slave. "To him be the glory forever." "In willing chains and sweet captivity," a Christian is the only free, fulfilled, happy man. Who could be a lukewarm Christian?

State the respective position of the Judaizers and of Paul on the subject of sanctification.

What does the statement that men are imprisoned in themselves mean?

How were the Galatians becoming "entangled again in According to Galatians, in what does falling "away from grace" consist?

How is it that leaders in the church, now, may be "fallen away from grace"?

How is it that leaders in the church, now, may be “fallen away from grace”?

What is the Christian interpretation of the statement, “The more dependent men are, the freer they are?”

Describe Christian freedom with respect to both its negative and its positive aspect.

In what sense is Christianity a new type of slavery?

What is the secret that initiates us into the freedom for which Christ sets us free?

02.14. ESSAY NO. 14

ESSAY NO. 14

"Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but . . . the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Php 3:9). This half verse, written by Paul a few years later than Galatians is a distillment of Galatians. Had Paul possessed legal righteousness, it would have been his own because he had earned it as a deserved wage for his perfect law-keeping. Instead, when he believed on Christ he received gospel righteousness from God as a gift.

"Ye are severed from Christ, ye that would be justified by the law . . . for we through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness." Note the contrast between legalists and Christians. Christians being already clothed in Christ's righteousness do not wait for righteousness itself, but for its fulfillment, "the crown of righteousness," after earth-life. While they wait, their hope and "faith working through love" fill their lives with patient, joyous work. By grace, through faith, in love, unto crowned hope. Inasmuch as Christians find in Christ every need for life, death, and beyond richly supplied, legalists who desert him for a "weak and beggarly" religion of the flesh are foolish indeed.

If Paul doubted the Galatians, he found hope for them in Christ and wrote: "I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord" that you will not fall away into the entanglements of legalism. He did not judge indiscriminately, but distinguished between the leaders and the led. Out of tender, fatherly love for the Galatians, he spared not the troublemakers, wished they would sever themselves from the church, and warned that they could not escape the judgment of God. It is evident (v. 11) that these "evil workers," willfully forgetting that Paul refused to circumcise Titus because to do so would have compromised essential Christian doctrine, took his circumcising Timothy when only expediency and Christian liberty were involved, and twisted it into the malicious, damaging lie that he was an unprincipled man, who preached circumcision when it suited his purpose to do so. Behold, religious partisanship, prejudice, and bigotry at work!

Men Are Triune Beings The natural man has a fleshly nature and a spiritual nature living within his body. When he experiences the spiritual birth, the Holy Spirit so identifies himself with and so indwells the man's spirit that a new order of life, the Christian life, which eventuates in eternal life, comes into being. Instead of this spiritual life extirpating "the mind of the flesh," which "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Romans 8:7), the two live in perpetual strife within the Christian until his death. At the resurrection when Christ comes, a Christian's body, which was "sown a natural body" and "is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44), shall be his again to live in forever. Wholly spiritual then, "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23), he is forever free from strife.

During this struggle between flesh and spirit throughout the Christian's life on earth, the arrogant flesh is only counterworked and kept in subjection, never eradicated. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6); it remains flesh in a regenerate man, and cannot become humble and

spiritual. The best a Christian is promised, before death and resurrection deliver him from his fallen fleshly nature, is that sin shall not dominate him, and reign over him. (See Romans 6:12-14). A Christian is still pursued, but no longer ruled, by Adam's sin. This world-old conflict heads up in God and Satan, who are deadly, personal enemies. God works through the spirit, and Satan through the flesh of men, "created half to rise, and half to fall." With the passing of time, Christians should increasingly become less sinful, carnal and worldly, and more saintly, spiritual and other-worldly. (On this background, Galatians 5:12-26 may mean more to us.) "A New Commandment"

"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants to one another" (Galatians 5:13). Satan is man's resourceful, stubborn, wily foe. One stratagem he uses to trick Christians into the indulgence of their flesh is to prompt them -to reason: "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly"; therefore let us "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Romans 5:20; Romans 6:1). Jude calls such as this "Turning the grace of God into Lasciviousness." But Christian liberty may be abused in many other ways. Satan was beguiling the Galatians into making their freedom a pretext for uncharitable treatment of their brethren. Apparently, they thought they were as free from moral law as from Mosaic ritualism, and had license to be lawless. Paul tells them to serve one another in Christian love, and they will discover: "That the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"; that God has perfected a way of making men, without their becoming legalists, lawful. As the character of Christ proves, law itself and love are not incompatible; Pharisaic legalism, not law, is what contradicts gospel grace, truth, and love.

Codified law is not necessary for Christians, because their "faith working through love" leads them into doing even more than codes can specify. A servant under law, after meeting all requirements, may be off duty for a time; but a servant under love, being unable to do all he wants to do, can never find a stopping place. A Christian often sins more than he pleases, but he never can love and work enough to please himself. His creed is: "Since I am at best only an unprofitable servant, I must ever be going onward, outward, upward, and beyond." Only this attitude can account for the incomparable lawfulness, labor, love, suffering, and success of the author of Galatians. To human merit and all other forms of "confidence in the flesh," Christian love is as dangerous as an atom bomb is to a city.

Just before he went to the cross, Christ said to his apostles: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples" (John 13:34; John 13:5). In giving the prime and pivotal place in his coming kingdom to love, he was launching a strange, new religion that would distill the Mosaic law into an eleventh commandment, so to speak, and create an immeasurably better social order than any order built on law could ever be. A wonderful King this, who loves men, without their being sensible of law, restraint, and duty, into lawful living plus! Verily, a strange, new religion then, and alack a strange, new religion yet. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!"

Distinguish between legal and gospel righteousness.

Explain how the phrase, "by grace, through faith, in love, unto hope, apply to gospel righteousness.

Why and how did Paul discriminate between the leaders and the led in Galatia?

Name the two invisible inhabitants that occupy man's body.

What relationship exists between these two as long as they dwell together in fallen man's body?

When and how are Christians to become wholly spiritual, completely redeemed from the flesh?

How may Christians turn "the grace of God into lasciviousness"?

How is it that Christians may live lawfully without becoming legalists?

Explain how it is that Christ's "new commandment" may build a better social order for humanity than could the Decalogue of Moses.

02.15. ESSAY NO. 15

ESSAY NO. 15

"If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15). The Galatians had ceased "running well" and were biting and devouring each other as a result, apparently, of their having "fallen away from grace" into legalism. Paul, who knew from his own past how loveless, bitter, and cruel the legalistic mind could be, and who wrote, "The power of sin is the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56), warned "Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another"; and advised, "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." This declension of the Galatians refutes the theory that the addition of the legal principle increases the power of the gospel to make superior Christians. The Galatian Heresy As an antidote for a righteousness of their own according to the law unto which the Galatians were sinking, Paul prescribes in this epistle pure, complete Christianity, which comes to a climax and focus "in the power of the Holy Spirit." God the Father planned Christianity before the foundation of the world, and worked toward its realization some 4000 years after he created Adam, before God the Son became man in order to add the human element; after this, God the Spirit, fulfilling Christ's promise to his apostles, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8), with a burst of power on Pentecost brought it to perfection as the divine instrument of redemption. Christianity is, therefore, the grand total of the combined workings of God in these three aspects. God is for, Christ is with (Emmanuel) and the Spirit is in Christians.

God the Spirit through Peter on Pentecost preached perfected Christianity for the first time, promising pardon and that he himself would dwell in Christians as his temple. Under Paul's preaching, the Galatians accepted this same Christianity in its entirety, but were persuaded later that they did not need it all. Consequently, they substituted a dead religion of the flesh for the spiritual, crucial, crowning part of living Christianity. Christianity thus devitalized and shorn of its power to save men from the practice of sin is not the religion that God created. It is the fatally perverted gospel that aroused Paul to his depths and led him, "being moved by the Holy Spirit," to write a dateless, "living and active" book, which could bless all men for all time.

It is significant that Paul, who had led the Galatians out of heathenism into Christianity, nowhere in this book feels the need to prove that Christians possess the Holy Spirit, but takes for granted that the Galatians knew the Spirit indwelt them. In Galatians 3:2, he asks, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith?" In Galatians 4:6, he reminds them that "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Now, in Galatians 5:18, he admonishes, "If (since) ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law," and closes the chapter with, "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk." Paul could not see how the Galatians, who still believed that in Christianity justification was graciously given, could be, concerning their sanctification, so foolish and inconsistent as to supplant the climactic, character-forming portion of Christianity, in which God personally contacts, vitalizes and renews man's fallen spirit, with the "weak and beggarly" fleshly religion of human merit.

What wonder that Paul is "again in travail" for his Galatians? They must be saved from deadly heresy! He insists that Christianity, being an indivisible, must be accepted either all, or none; that to think they do not need in their stern struggle against "the flesh" to be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians 3:16), is to challenge the wisdom and integrity of God, who fashioned Christianity ; and that to refuse the deep, inner workings of the Spirit is to counteract the whole of Christianity.

, Does Paul really teach all this? It behooves us, by reading the Bible honestly, to find out. It will be well, if new wine bursts old skins. But we do not understand how the Spirit works! Are we required to do so? Will Christianity fail to work unless we know all of its infinite workings! When we understand how Satan works in man's flesh, probably we can understand better how the Holy Spirit, without overriding man's will and depersonalizing him, works in his spirit.

Flesh Versus Spirit

Having discussed uncharitableness as one way of abusing Christian liberty Paul proceeds in the last of Galatians 5:1-26 to discuss uncleanness as another way. "The flesh" is not merely the human body. Bodiless angels have committed some of the sins listed here in Paul's "works of the flesh." As Adam, before he sinned, and Christ prove, flesh itself is not sinful. Satan makes his attack on men through their flesh. When they yield, he makes the flesh the seat of further operations against the whole man, "spirit and soul and body." "The flesh" is man's fallen, sub-human nature, with its inbred sin. Individual man, with his nature maimed and his flesh already invaded by the enemy, is doomed in this unequal struggle unless he gets divine support. And Christianity, all of it, is this imperative divine support. Blind and foolish indeed, ignorant of himself, of Satan, and of God, is he who dares this warfare without putting "on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). The responsibility of Christians is to make the ideal crucifixion of their flesh a reality in their lives. They are not promised exemption from temptations of the flesh, but that, seeing they are not under law, but grace, superhuman aid shall be supplied according to their need (See 1 Corinthians 10:13), thus assuring victory over "the flesh." Probably, if we Christians could but realize how miserably we fail to live up to Christian standards, we would not be flesh-sufficient and self-righteous. When we realize what it means really to love our brethren as ourselves and to fulfil the lofty requirements of love as defined by Christ, Paul and John; realize how unruly our tongues, how envious (not to mention our secret joy at the setback of a rival) of the success of others, how touchy of our "rights," reputation and position; and realize, how self-centered we actually are, lifted up when praised and honored, cast down when slighted and set aside, and how little we really love and care for others when we realize that all of this, and more, is of the flesh, which is ideally dead, is it not time to ask ourselves whether or not we have "fallen away from grace" into the flesh and legalism, trying to lift ourselves by our own boot straps?

As the Galatians became more legalistic, did they become better Christians?

How did God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit (the triune God) cooperate in creating perfected Christianity?

Discourse on the meaning of God is for us, Christ is with us, and the Spirit is in us.

Why did not Paul try to prove to the Galatians that the Holy Spirit dwelt in them?

Where does Christianity reach the summit of its power and efficacy?

Were not the Galatians leaving off the essential, crowning climax of Christianity?

If Christianity be deprived of the superhuman help of the Holy Spirit, what help do Christians have that Jews before Christ did not have?

Is it necessary that men understand intellectually the infinite divine workings in either nature or religion in order to enjoy benefits?

Could we but realize how proud, self-centered, fleshly, loveless, and ungrateful we still actually are, and how very little and weak we are in our own natural strength, would it not help us to see how desperately we need "power through his Spirit in the inward man"?

02.16. ESSAY NO. 16

ESSAY NO. 16 The sins in the church at Corinth included partyism, fornication, litigation, idolatry, and drunkenness. Apparently, the Galatians were guilty of like sins, but Paul saw another sin in them that disturbed him far more deeply. They were forsaking God's house, built on the rock, for one of their own building on the sand. After having begun in the Spirit, they were turning back to the flesh; denying a full redemption in the Spirit, they were looking for a supplement in their own natural strength and ability to work out for themselves perfected righteousness. In effect, according to Paul, this made void the grace of God, the cross of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and destroyed the house the triune God built to its deepest foundation. Thus, their religion became all of the flesh.

Inasmuch as the Galatians did not know "the deep things of Satan" (Revelation 2:24), they did not see the doctrinal implications of their legalism. There is no better evidence of Satan's deep malice and demonic sagacity than his perverting the law, which God intended to convict men of sin, to humble them, and to lead them to Christ, into a powerful instrument to make men proud and self-righteous. He is deep and wicked enough to turn Christians into blind, Pharisaic hypocrites.

Doubtless, the Galatians continued to preach baptism "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" for the remission of sins, observe the Lord's Supper, and meet other requirements, yet, all unknown to themselves, they were "fallen away from grace." Christians today should not think that because they do not observe the carnal ordinances of Moses, they are immune to the legal principle. They should realize that, in infinite wisdom and goodness, God in Christianity, without any help from man except his absolute surrender, assumes all responsibility, no matter what Satan knows and does, for enabling and perfecting Christians who really trust him and cooperate with him. This kind of faith would have saved the Galatians from legalism with its truly terrible consequences, as it will save Christians today from legal-ism with its truly terrible consequences.

"Works of the Flesh" A cursory examination of these "works" shows a catalogue of fifteen items (ASV), all related to the Mosaic Code. The first three items ("fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness") remind us of, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The next two ("idolatry, sorcery") of, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Then follow eight items ("enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings"), which violate, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Where love is thin, faults are thick." The last two ("drunkenness, revellings") are beastly self-gratification, which are always beneath human dignity. With authoritative finality that admits no argument, Paul follows this list with: "I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Let us read the list again; it was written for us too.

Sorcery, or witchcraft, which is superhuman knowledge and power acquired by compact with evil spirits and traffic with the dead, is a biblical subject. God gives warning against it in the Old Testament: "There shall not be found with thee any one that useth divination ... or a sorcerer ... or

a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer (one who communicates with the dead) . . . For whosoever doth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 18:10; Deuteronomy 18:12). Immediately following this scripture, God promises to send Christ in lieu of such leaders. In 1 Samuel 28:1-25, is found the story of King Saul and the witch of Endor. Saul's epitaph reads: "So Saul died for his trespass . . . and also for that he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit" (1 Chronicles 10:13). In the New Testament, we meet sorcery often, always opposing Christianity. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:1-40); "Elymas the sorcerer" (Acts 13:1-52); and the maid with "a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:1-40) are well-known figures. Sorcery was very prevalent in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41). Satan, "the god of this world," opposed Christianity, especially in new places with sorcery. In Galatians 5:20, written some twenty-five years after Pentecost, Paul brackets it with idolatry, with which it is allied and coeval. At a time yet to come, all sorcerers of all time shall have their part "in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8). The two leading features of sorcery, reading destiny and commerce with the dead, are prevalent today. Doubtless, there is much humbuggery, based as all idolatry is, on greed, superstition and religious ignorance, yet, according to the Bible, a core of reality exists. The road to Endor, for men like Saul, is still open. For Christians, however, as for the ancient Jews, it is a closed road of disobedience and ruin. They cannot honor Christ as Mediator in some dark room seeking guidance from a "medium." This and all such like is of the flesh.

"Fruit of the Spirit"

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." The Spirit in this verse is a tree bearing a cluster of ninefold heavenly fruit. Because of its relationship to the rest of the cluster, love comes first. Without love, none of the fruit is sound and wholesome. The joy, the longsuffering, the meekness and all the rest, if they have not love, are rotten at the core and worthless. Magic love is living, contagious, creative, and imparts these qualities to the entire cluster. "The greatest of these is love." Love, joy, peace! What more would you have? Long after the shallow wells of the flesh have run dry, from the perpetual fountain of the Spirit down deep within the human spirit continue to "flow rivers of living water" for "refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "A well of water springing up unto eternal life." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" and fruit. The Holy Spirit is the only tree that produces "the fruit of the Spirit." Since such fruit is not native to earth, the flesh does not, and cannot produce it. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." All Paul knows to do with the flesh is to crucify it "with the passions and lusts thereof." God does not expect men in the flesh to produce spiritual fruit and live his life until he gives them his Spirit, and they "become partakers of the divine nature." As without changing gravity a magnet counteracts it, so without changing the flesh, the Holy Spirit counterworks it, and keeps it in subjection so that it cannot "bite and devour" and destroy. It never becomes spiritual, any more than foolishness becomes wisdom. It is a tiger which only the Spirit can even chain.

Explain how the Galatian heresy made void the cross of Christ.

Instead of being convicted of sin by the law of Moses, how did the Pharisaic Judaizers react to it?

How is it that men may be baptized for the remission of sins and observe the Lord's Supper, yet be legalists, fallen from grace?

Name some laws of the Decalogue that "the works of the flesh" violate? What does the term, "the flesh," as used in this passage comprise?

How are idolatry and sorcery related? (See Revelation 21:8 also).

Name some sorcerous enemies of the early church, and tell under what circumstances they were most active.

Is there any intimation in the Bible that idolaters and sorcerers will cease to oppose the church during this dispensation?

Will the flesh ever become spiritual?

Why is it that "the fruit of the Spirit" can be produced only in Christians?

02.17. ESSAY NO. 17

ESSAY NO. 17 The book of Galatians champions Christian liberty and nobility, and challenges legalistic bondage and bigotry; it is a comparative study of the religion of the Spirit and the religion of the flesh. Galatians 5:1-26, Galatians 6:1-18, especially, warn against the perversions and abortions into which legalism sinks the church. To correct the strange misunderstanding that Christian liberty gives license to indulge the flesh, Paul discusses four points under the heading, "Use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh": first, do not be lawless and consume one another; second, do not be unclean and wallow in the filth of the flesh; third, do not be proud and despotic; fourth, do not be avaricious and parsimonious. The legalistic Christian in falling "away from grace," inevitably falls into some or all of these fleshpots. The assertion that the addition of the legal principle would promote good morals and spirituality in the Galatian churches is not being fulfilled. Rather, the flesh is running riot to the peril of clean living and Christianity. Paul shows that the pride of the flesh causes much of their abuse of Christian liberty.

Gaining a Brother

"Even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Even a Christian over whom the flesh does not reign, may be so pursued by the flesh, which ever stalks him, that he sins. This verse does not contemplate a reckless sinner who overtakes sin, or meets it head-on. This man, like Adam in Eden, is "afraid" and ashamed. He needs a kind, understanding brother to lift him out of the remorse that leads to despair up to the repentance that restores. In such cases, legalists, smug and secure in their false self-competency, thinking they cannot fall and that all should be just like them, are stern, exacting and incapable of being gentle and tender with others. Paul wrote the church at Corinth about the restoration of penitent brothers who had fallen: "Forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Corinthians 2:7-11). In the event his recommendation concerning an offending brother should work, Christ says, "Thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15). Gaining the brother is the first purpose of discipline. The self-righteous bigot, who cannot see his brother for whom Christ died with a brother's eye, and who thinks the way to restore him is to "talk down" to him with an air of, "I never would have even thought of doing such a thing," had better not attempt it. I have read of a prisoner who resented all "church workers" until a meek Christian man went to his cell, sat beside him with an arm about him, and said: "Was it not good in God to send his Son to die for poor sinners like you and me?" That thawed the ice at his heart. This man could understand the prisoner because he understood himself and the gospel of grace. He did not deceive himself by thinking he was "something" when he was "nothing." Not until a man realizes that he has no merit before God, and can never have, can he be really gentle with men. Without compromising truth or winking at sin, spiritual men can correct brethren without offending or humiliating them.

Bearing Burdens

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). To sympathize with and help each other bear the common infirmities of mortal life should be as natural for Christians, who are parts of the same organism and who share the same nature, as for the various members of the human body to help each other. Christians may also share with one another the burdens arising from the troubles and sins of others, as, for instance, a mother brokenhearted over a sinful child. All such bearing of burdens fulfills the law of Christ, which reads: "A new commandment I give unto you that ye should love one another; even as I have loved you." Of course too, Christians are happy to follow and fulfill up to their measure, the life of Christ, the great burden Bearer.

There is an undercurrent of thought here, which comes more to the surface in Romans 15:15-21 and 2 Corinthians 10:12-18. Throughout his missionary career, Paul, resolutely refusing to build on another's foundation, sought out new fields. After he had planted the church in Galatia, Judaizers came in to take over. They thought they were very superior to Paul, gave themselves airs, loaded men down with "burdens grievous to be borne," which they would not so much as touch with their little fingers, and lorded it over the church generally. That Christians should "mutual burdens bear" never once entered their minds. Are not these Galatian Judaizers much like some pre-Christian Pharisees and lawyers, whom Christ encountered in Jerusalem? Paul's having once been an unbending legalist himself gives him their number precisely. Legalism, because it makes man the center and measure, never has made, nor can it ever make, spiritual men. The religion of the flesh is destructively and fatally off center.

Paul is setting the Judaizers in their place and rescuing the church from their strangle hold. Let them cease being puffed up with fictitious self-importance, and, with envious scorn, setting better men aside; cease boosting the defunct power and glory of Judaism, and, bloated with ignorant pride, cease imposing an impossible legal yoke on the neck of God's free sons. Let them get out and "prove," not just think, they are something; let them do some real honest, independent Christian work, because after all, a Christian is known by his own work and character, not his neighbor's. The Greek word translated "burden" (Galatians 6:5) is not the word rendered "burdens" (Galatians 6:2). The practical lesson is that a Christian's own life is the basis of his standing and reward. Concerning this class of men in Corinth, Paul wrote: "For we are not bold to number or compare ourselves with certain of them that commend themselves: but they themselves measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" (2 Corinthians 10:12). Men's comparing themselves with other men is idle and wholly of the unwholesome flesh. It is like a child's thinking he is nine feet high because a false yardstick which he made himself says he is. If they want a standard of comparison, let them use Christ, the proper standard and touchstone of life and work; if they must have law, let them fulfill his law of love.

Discourse on the statement that the religion of the flesh and the religion of the Spirit are mutual opposites.

Name the four ways, according to Paul, in which the abuse of Christian freedom may "give occasion to the flesh."

Discuss the part pride of the flesh plays in abuse of Christian freedom.

Why cannot legalists administer effective discipline to weak brethren?

With respect to an offending brother, what is the purpose of discipline?

How did Paul and Christ deal with traditional ritualists and religious bigots?

In what two senses is the word "burden" used in Galatians 6?

What does fulfilling the law of Christ mean in this chapter?

Should Christian compare themselves with other Christians?

02.18. ESSAY NO. 18

ESSAY NO. 18

Paul teaches that a perpetual struggle between the flesh and the spirit takes place within Christians. The stubborn flesh, though ideally crucified & a hopeless law-breaker, wages in practical life a lingering battle. It insists that Christian liberty grants it indulgences, incompatible with spiritual living. In our studies of Paul's rebuttal, we are now to hear his answer to the clamor of flesh that it has right to money that belongs to the Spirit. What Christians do with their money is pivotal. They must not be covetous and illiberal.

Sowing and Reaping A passage to Galatia and one to Corinth, two of Paul's great Scriptures on a Christian's use of money, both teach the correspondence between sowing and reaping. Galatians 6:6-10 stresses the truth that the harvest must agree with the seed sown in kind; 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 the supplementary truth that the harvest will be proportional to the seed sown in quantity. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully . . . -And he that supplieth seed for the sower and bread for food (in nature), shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing (in religion), and increase the fruit of your righteousness: ye being enriched unto all liberality." This scripture teaches that God's work done in God's way, shall never lack God's supplies; that one who really desires to give shall never be denied the privilege and blessing of giving. What an opportunity! Why be stingy? Is it reasonable to trust the seed, the soil, and the sun, yet not trust the word of their faithful Maker and Governor? As if to guard against a misunderstanding of "each man shall bear his own burden" that would lead to illiberality, Paul follows it with: "But let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." Although this passage deals primarily with material support for teachers, it also has a much broader scope. In view of "the works of the flesh," which he has just enumerated, Paul means to tell the Galatians that "the flesh" is a dangerous enemy so resourceful and irreconcilable that it must not be pampered, but rather be turned over to the executioner for crucifixion; that to allow it to spend money on its own pleasure that should be used in spreading the gospel is to reap corruption; that only after it is curbed can they sow to the Spirit and reap life eternal; that eternal-life is contingent upon continuance in well-doing, preferably to Christians, though others are not excluded.

Sowing and reaping is truly a solemn matter. In the field of destiny, nations and individuals reap as they sow. The condition of the world today shows that God is not mocked. The world has sown to the flesh, and is now reaping the inevitable destruction and desolation. As for men, the present determines eternity. According to God's wise and inviolable decree, flesh is flesh, and can never evolve into spirit. Grapes are not to be gathered from thorns. The flesh, anywhere, is a marvelously deceitful and diligent architect of misery and ruin. Now as ever, the flesh in the church is its weakness and frustration. The Galatians are not the last Christians to begin in the Spirit, only

to be bewitched into finishing in the flesh. The flesh is unbelievably adept in simulating the Spirit. Many things that seem to many Christians to be of the Spirit are of the flesh, and must therefore reap corruption. "God is not mocked."

Concerning this subject, we need to be on our guard against materialism and determinism. The superlative good news of all time is that the personal God of providence proposes to intervene between sowing and reaping that the harvest of flesh need not come to the full. God's offer of pardon and repair constitute Christianity. God, the Maker of the law of sowing and reaping, arrests its operation in this world, and promises more than completely to correct all injury man has suffered, by giving him a spiritual body at the resurrection. All this is but God lawfully exercising his sovereign liberty in grace. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins" (Psalms 103:10). Did Joseph's brothers reap all they sowed? Christ did not say to the thief dying at his side, "You have sown tares, now reap tares." Paul's "if" in "if we faint not" gives light. If the Galatians ceased sowing to the Spirit, the harvest would fail. Likewise, if men cease sowing to the flesh, corruption is arrested in time, and life wholly spiritual is reaped in eternity. But even sins forgiven leave scars that remain until death.

Double Crucifixion In the close of his letter to the Galatians, Paul draws a sharp contrast between himself and the Judaizers. He offers as proof of his strong, unselfish, personal attachment the fact that he, apparently with exceptional procedure and discomfort, writes them in his own handwriting (Galatians 6:11). Contrariwise, the selfish, insincere Judaizers have no personal interest in them whatsoever. By having Gentile Christians circumcised, they cannot only escape the bitter, unrelenting persecution of orthodox Jews, but also build themselves up as able, skillful founders and leaders of a new Jewish sect. They have no intention of burdening their party with the whole, wearisome law; the crux, circumcision, will suffice. Paul's blunt, unreserved expose of these time-serving politicians and hypocrites with their religion, based, as are all religions except pure Christianity, on law, flesh, and human merit, surely is enough to cause leaders of the church today to probe their souls for the inspiration of their leadership and activities.

"They desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified to me, and I to the world." In this incisive language, Paul gives his interpretation of Christianity. The cross was to Paul, Christ's invitation, "Come, die with me." The glory of the crucified, risen Lord blinded Paul to the world physically three days, and spiritually forever. According to the flesh, it was the end of Paul; he attended his own funeral! To him it was a choice between the church and the world—one or the other, not both. "I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ" (Php 3:8). The cross speaks of death and separation, without compromise, It divides mankind into the spiritual church and the fleshly world.

In the matter of sowing and reaping, explain how Galatians 6:6-10 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 supplement each other.

Is money the only thing involved in Christian steward ship?

Will Christians who really want to give be denied the privilege of giving?

How does the doctrine of sowing and reaping apply to nations?

How may the harvest of "corruption" in individuals be reduced in this world and obliterated in eternity?

Name some fleshly motives that actuated the Judaizers in Galatia.

How is it today that Christians may think they are sowing to the Spirit, when in reality they are sowing to the flesh?

What is the only proper treatment for the flesh?

What is the meaning of the statement that Paul attended his own funeral?

02.19. ESSAY NO. 19

ESSAY NO. 19 The religion of the flesh and the religion of the Spirit are mutual opposites. In the Bible a group of closely interlocked words and phrases (flesh, old man, body of sin, natural man, world, law, sin, death) are descriptive of the former. Another group, similarly interlocked, (spirit, spiritual man, new man, grace, cross, church, righteousness, life) are descriptive of the latter. There is no interlocking between the groups, however ; they are as distinct as are sheep and goats.

After saying that the Judaizers, though they pretended to be the best Christians in Galatia, selfishly gloried in the flesh, Paul, as the antithesis, says: "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is, their chief satisfaction, joy, and crown was, hypocritically, to build up in the church a legalistic party, while Paul's chief delight and glory was in the cross. "The emblem of suffering and shame ... so despised by the world." Elsewhere, Paul says that Christians, "Worship by the Spirit of God, glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3). The Cross The irreconcilable warfare between God and Satan came to a crisis in the decisive cross of Christ, where God is revealed at his very best and Satan at his very worst. As Christ faced the cross he said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (on the cross), will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:31-32). In the invincible strategy of God, Christ's being crucified by Satan through his world became the means of ultimately casting out usurping Satan and his doomed, corrupt system of government over the world, which at that time was represented by the Roman Empire and Caesar. As David slew the fallen Goliath with his own sword, so God by the resurrection of Christ snatched Satan's weapon out of his hand and turned it against him. In this long conflict, Adam sided with Satan, and Christ with God; neither could be on both sides. The struggle, as seen between Christ's church and Satan's world, yet divides men. "What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:15). The church and the world will not amalgamate. The confusion, wickedness and misery of the world are no more displeasing to God than are the pride and works of the world; the sin of the rebel flesh and the righteousness of the rebel flesh are both abominable to him. Christians, being identified with Christ as they are, must be rejected and hated by the world, which has never repented of murdering Christ. "If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before you . . . because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19).

"Jesus suffered without the gate" of Jerusalem, and "without the camp" of Judaism. (See Hebrews 13:11-14). Although this scripture originally pleaded with Jewish Christians not to desert Christ, but to cleave to him, become strangers, pilgrims, even outcasts with him as he literally "went out, bearing the cross for himself," it still applies to all Christians of all races. The cross no more separates Christians from their sins than it separates them from the world; it no more brings them peace with God than it brings them war with the flesh. To help Jewish Christians first, and all Christians since, not to think the narrow gate, the strait way, and the separated life too difficult, or even unreasonable, this scripture closes: "For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after

the city which is to come." Indeed, this is still timely monition for worldly Christians. And who can say it so well as Paul said to the Galatians long ago, "The world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." A New Creation

"For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." This verse is the very heart of Galatians, even of Christianity. All along, Paul had been thundering, "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law"; thundering, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" to grow in conformity to the universal principle of life and growth in all realms—the principle that growth proceeds from within to without, never the reverse. When men give themselves over to God in the Christian way, such a renewal takes place in their spirits that a covenant of law is no longer needed to curb their flesh. And, since Christians are the first and only men ever to experience this constitutional, spiritual renewal, they are properly a new creation. "Wherefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (both here and Gal., ASV, have alternative readings, "a new creation"): old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). Most men, even some Christians are lamentably slow to learn that only the God who created them in the beginning can re-create them after discreative Satan has bruised their heads.

Lazarus and a few others have been called back from death to live again in their same, resuscitated bodies until released by death again. But the body in which Christ lived after he came back from death was a strange, new creation. It was a type of human body with which earth is unacquainted—a spiritual body— adapted to a spiritual eternity. Christ's new body is not only the "firstfruits" of the bodies to be raised at his coming; it is also a symbol of his body, the church, another new creation. Before the church was created, mankind consisted of only two classes of men—Jews and Gentiles. Out of willing individuals from these two classes, Christ created a "new man, so making peace" (Ephesians 2:15), thus creating a third class of men, in which "neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision." "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or unto the church of God" (1 Corinthians 10:32).

What makes legalists legalists is they fail to see that the transition from legalism (elements of the world, Judaic or otherwise) to Christianity is a change of religious center from flesh to Spirit, from man to God. Christ calls this essential, constitutional change, that really makes old things new, a new birth. This spiritual birth is what makes Christianity a new creation, a new covenant. Christians who fall into legalism, Galatians teaches, "are severed from Christ . . . are fallen away from grace," and have the same old, futile religion of the flesh, which men had before God in grace came to die for them, and to indwell and to strengthen them "with power through his Spirit in the inward man."

Why is the reconciliation of the world and the church utterly impossible?

In what sense did Satan crucify himself and the world over which he is prince (See John 12:31) when he crucified Christ?

What bearing does this question have on Paul's declaration, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"?

How did the risen body of Christ differ from the risen body of Lazarus?

Did Christ's risen body differ in appearance from his body that was buried?

What is the import of Paul's affirmation, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep"?

Of what other new creation is Christ in his uniquely new, risen body a part?

What change in center of life must men make in order to be spiritual Christians?

Why did Christ say that one experiencing this change was "born anew"?

02.20. ESSAY NO. 20

ESSAY NO. 20

Christians may trust God never to require, or to permit, anything that is inconsistent with the laws of their mind and nature, or that is inimical to their welfare. To them, God is too wise to make mistakes, and too good to betray their confidence and take advantage of their limitations and helplessness. In Christianity, this is the basic relationship between Creator and creature.

Frustration of Christians

It is very difficult for men really to get onto this Christian ground. Even when they intellectually perceive the correct relationship between the divine and the human in Christianity and want to dethrone self that Christ may reign in their lives, there may be no corresponding inner reality to the outer symbolism. Instead of the old man's being buried and a new man's being born in baptism, the old man may remain alive to dominate the desires, ambitions and activities of their lives. Those who go through this pattern of a regenerated life with little or no change in purpose and direction of life should not be surprised when they reap frustration, for "God is not mocked."

Christ taught much that pertains to this matter. He repeatedly warned his disciples against doing things to be seen of men and against the unreality and hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In substance he said: "The attempt of the Pharisees to make men think they are pious and good, when they are not, has eaten the very heart out of Hebrew religion. Beware of their leaven; this must not be repeated in my kingdom." Did Peter, James and John, as well as Judas, need this caution? He warned "his disciples first of all" (Luke 12:1) of this supreme danger. Christ knew that not only his immediate disciples were disposed, but also that many in coming generations would be disposed to pervert his way of living into a code, which they would attempt to "stick on" the old man instead of becoming new creatures, who could live Christ's way naturally, because it would be in harmony with their new nature. He knew that the effort to do good without being good would be as unnatural and impossible as for thistles to produce figs: he knew that this unreality would dress wolves in sheep's clothing.

Some Christians are frustrated and joyless because their "fruit of the Spirit," like cut flowers, is rootless and artificial. As the foolish Galatians and Colossians (Colossians 2:16-23) thought, they foolishly think that Christianity lacks power and effectiveness; that, if the best fruit is to be had, the gospel must be eked out by "rudiments of the world," legalism, and human merit. This perversion upsets the exquisite balance and perfect adaption of the gospel to human need, cuts the tap root of the fruit of the Spirit, and otherwise obstructs the divine "power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

God's Sovereign Cure-all

Sin has not distorted the nature of plants and animals as it has the nature of man. They still live naturally according to their original nature. But when Adam rebelled against God, something deep

within his inmost being snapped with catastrophic ruin to his whole personality. He was so disorganized that he could never restore himself, because he had lost the power both to do right and to refrain from doing wrong. No matter how heroically men strive in this depraved state to live rightly, they, as Romans 7:1-25 attests, always miserably fail. Since other creatures of earth, from animals, birds and insects through flowers, have never so "fallen," such striving is unknown to them. Man's being exceptional among earthly creatures in this respect is good evidence of his having been created in the image of God, of his tragic fall, and of his fitness for restoration. To correct all the ravages that sin has wrought in human nature is the prodigious task that God has set himself in Christianity. And inasmuch as nothing can reach maturity except through the fulfillment of its nature, God proposes to restore man's original nature so that he may live, naturally, as he was made to live, without moral drudgery. Now, this is a religion worth having, and worthy of God! However, Christians on earth are yet in training, and, by reason of their imperfect surrender to God, much frustration and failure occur. "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him (Jesus). But we behold . . . Jesus . . . saying . . . Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" (Hebrews 2:8-13). God and Christ are perfecting a host of "children," healed of all wounds, to be "a new harmony yet." "Not yet" do we see it; we are yet to see it.

Sowing seed in soil does not make a harvest. In both nature and religion, sowing seed is prerequisite, but inadequate. The seeded soil must lie exposed to the sun for a season that God with superhuman work may produce his harvest. Likewise, Christians must lie exposed to God's super-human, redemptive workings as he advances his stupendous task of restoring man's original personality. And as men, knowing that the work of seed, soil and sun cannot be divorced, never vex themselves about the part each plays in making a crop, so they need not argue about the respective work of the inseparable word and Spirit in their souls. Nevertheless, God the Spirit's ministry was not completed with his giving the written word. He takes up his abode in those who receive his word to help their infirmities, and in wordless groanings to pray for them (See Romans 8:26). Of course, all that he does is in conjunction and agreement with his written word.

Christians, can we but realize how deep our hurt, how on a human level incurable our wound, how when given the best human treatment it but festers and grows worse, surely we can humbly and truly trust God's treatment. Can we but realize the difficulty and the immensity of the task of re-creating wrecked humanity, that, "It is by no (mere) breath, turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death"; realize that not only man's destiny, but also God's name, honor and glory are involved, surely we can see the extreme folly and peril of rending the seamless robe of Christianity and discarding part of it as being unnecessary. If in our redemption,, God, assuming a work that, if any work can tax him, taxes his resources, graciously proposes to dwell in us as his temple and to strengthen us at the place of our greatest weakness and need "with power through his Spirit, in the inward man," who are we to say that such help is contrary to the laws of the human mind! May not such an attitude be responsible for some of our frustration with its mere fluttering instead of flying? "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

We close our, "Studies in Galatians" with Paul's benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen."

How is it that the old, fleshly man, who is symbolically buried in baptism, often survives in Christians and dominates their lives?

What is the significance of the fact that, while mere animals without effort live in harmony with their nature, men with all their human strivings never live in harmony with their nature, and fulfill themselves?

How is it that Christianity enables fallen man to find ever-increasing peace, rest and fulfillment?

Discuss the relationship that exists between God's part and man's part as they together work out human redemption.

Are the parts that God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible play, respectively, in redeeming men isolated? or do these parts supplement each other to make an indivisible whole?

Is a Christian in analyzing himself able to find some thing that any one of these four did, or does, for him independently of the others?

Did the ministry of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit cease when they had completed the Bible? If detached from the triune God, will the Bible save men? (See John 5:39-40).

Comment on the analogy that exists between God's super human workings in nature and in religion. (See Mark 4:26-29).

May Christians pervert the work of God through the Holy Spirit by adding flesh to Spirit, as Roman Catholics pervert the work of God through Christ by adding Mary's mediation to Christ's?

03.00. Studies in Philippians

Studies in
Philippians BY
R. C. Bell

03.000. Contents

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03.01. LESSON 1

LESSON 1 In Acts 16:1-40 is found a graphic account of Paul's founding at historic Philippi, about A.D. 52, the first church in Europe. According to the book of Acts, when Christ attacks one of Satan's heathen strongholds, Satan bestirs himself in opposition. After unsuccessfully resisting the gospel beachhead on the continent of Europe by trying to have men think that "a maid having a spirit of divination" was in alliance with Paul, he turned to persecution, and beat and imprisoned Paul and Silas. This second method of opposition failed so miserably, however, that Paul's jailer became a Christian, and probably with Lydia and the maid formed the nucleus of the church in Philippi.

Inasmuch as there can be no alliance or compromise between God and Satan, Paul refused true testimony when it was given by Satan's instrument. Likewise, Christ rebuked demons when they declared who he was (Luke 4:34-35). Neither Christ nor Paul would suffer such profanation of truth. "The prince of this world," the father of lies, never speaks truth unless the circumstances are such that God will be dishonored and man duped, for as Christ said, "there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). The adage, "Take truth and good wherever you find them," because of its strong appeal to human pride and sufficiency, has been disastrously used by Satan from Eden onward. Men cannot discern between fundamental truth and error, between ultimate good and evil. Their only safety lies in following "the good Shepherd," who can so discern, and in knowing "not the voice of strangers." "The way of man is not in himself" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Philippians Is Autobiographic

Philippians is more peaceful than Galatians, and more personal than Ephesians. Instead of being largely an answer to questions like 1 Corinthians, or a treatise of theology like Romans, it contains much intimate, personal matter like 2 Corinthians. There is a world of difference, however, between these two letters. In 2 Corinthians, Paul is forced, much against his preference, to talk about himself in order to maintain his apostleship against envious "false apostles" toward whom he has no cause for gratitude, while in Philippians he is pouring out spontaneous, fatherly affection upon his dearest children, upon his kindest and best-loved church; in the two letters, he tells his experience for altogether different reasons. Paul knows that he is God's spiritual laboratory where greater things are being wrought than any alchemist could ever discover in a physical laboratory. From his Roman prison, therefore, he tells the Philippians by what means he has become the Christian he is, hoping that they also may be moved to try the Christian experiment fully. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example" (Php 3:17) may be called the key verse of the book. O how much we all need Christianity as Paul understood, taught, and lived it!

Blemishes To Be Corrected

Although Paul does less chiding in Philippians than in letters to other churches, he hopes to correct two ugly blemishes in Philippi, the first of which is disunion. In the first chapter, after

saluting “all the saints,” he uses the word “all” with the same import several times in such expressions as, ‘I long after you all,’ as if he could not bear to think of them as being divided among themselves. In the same chapter, in order to show that he thinks of them as one in grace and service, he writes: “Stand fast in one spirit with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel.” The second chapter begins with a strong personal plea for unity: “Make full my joy, that ye may be of the same mind.” Then in Php 4:1-23, still more personally and earnestly, he beseeches: “I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord.” What can all this mean but that Paul, though likely no doctrinal differences and open breaches existed, looked with anxious eye and grieved heart upon some personal differences that were gnawing at the peace and usefulness of the church? The second blemish that he hopes to correct is despondency. The church, founded in bitter persecution, has continued “to suffer in his (Christ’s) behalf” throughout its existence of some ten years—ample time after “the first sprightly running” for an Ephesian drift from “first love” (Revelation 2:4). But Paul exhorts, “in nothing affrighted by the adversaries” (Php 1:18). Moreover, Paul’s long imprisonment and longer absence so depresses them that he is constrained to write: “So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”; for though I am absent, God, “who began a good work in you,” is still present and “worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Php 2:12-13); therefore “Rejoice in the Lord always again . . . rejoice” (Php 4:4). The word “all” as the opposite of disunion, and the word “rejoice” as the opposite of despondency are used so repeatedly throughout the book that they may be called keywords. It is said that the devil upon being asked by his imps why he depended so much on despondency as a weapon against God explained that it was easy to discourage Christians, and that when once discouraged and despondent they made his best, especially undercover, workers. And thus the enemy sows “tares also among the wheat.”

Skeletal Outline of Philippians Theme: Rejoicing in the Lord always.

1. Rejoicing in evangelism and in facing death. Php 1:1-30.
2. Rejoicing in lowly service and in brotherhood. Php 2:1-30.
3. Rejoicing in imperfections and in heavenly citizenship. Php 3:1-21.
4. Rejoicing in anxiety and in privation. Php 4:1-23.

Christ’s name (not counting pronouns) occurs about fifty times in the 104 verses of Philippians. According to the book, Christ lives in each one of us who can say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ” (Php 1:21). In the four chapters, Christ, successively, is our life, our example, our object, and our strength. The rich cream of Paul’s long personal experience with Christ rises in this prison epistle. May we all remember ever that no faith can live itself out in our lives that is not sustained and renewed by memory, experience, and hope.

QUESTIONS

1. Relate, according to Acts 16:1-40, the circumstances of the founding of the church at Philippi.
2. Why did Satan “tempt” Christ personally in the wilderness, and later relentlessly oppose his church?

3. Name two methods that Satan used in opposing the establishment of a Christian beachhead in Europe.
 4. Where and in what condition was Paul when he wrote Philippians?
 5. What interpretation did Paul put upon his persecution by Jews and Romans, and upon the hostility of his false brethren?
 6. Contrast, in general character, Philippians and Galatians; Philippians and Ephesians; Philippians and Second Corinthians.
 7. Name two faults in the church at Philippi which Paul hoped to correct by this letter.
 8. State the general theme of Philippians, and tell what particular phase of it each chapter treats.
- What does the statement. "The cream of the gospel rises in this letter," mean?

03.02. LESSON 2

LESSON 2 The salutation in part reads: "To all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Members of the church at Philippi were all saints and Christians (the words are synonymous), for all were called out of the world and set apart, or sanctified, unto Christ. When some of these saints met certain qualifications and manifested special aptitude for spiritual leadership, the church selected and appointed them bishops, or overseers. Others, upon becoming qualified to "serve tables," were appointed deacons.

Here is the simple organization and government of the local New Testament church. A church may be either too highly or too loosely organized for efficiency. In the former case, power finally centers in one man, which inevitably corrupts, while in the latter case, the potential gifts and powers of members remain undeveloped. Scriptural church polity, properly balancing these two extremes, demonstrates its divine wisdom by encouraging every member of the congregation, up to his measure, to worship, work, and grow.

Retrospective-Prospective Introduction

(Php 1:3-11) This opening passage brims with thanks, gratitude, prayer, and joy. Though its author is fast in prison some 700 miles away, uncertain of his earthly future, its recipients must have felt his eager, buoyant, dynamic spirit among them again. As a saint among saints (Paul does not call himself "apostle" as he usually does in his letters), he tells them that he holds them fondly in his heart as joint-heirs of grace and as fellow-workers in his "bonds and in the confirmation of the gospel from the first day until now." The Philippians, having been taught that, when truth is learned, duty begins, became missionaries immediately and "sent once and again" to Paul's need in Thessalonica, where he established the second Macedonian church. Later, Paul used the exceptionally liberal giving of these churches as an inducement to move the Corinthians to give. The substantial Macedonians, descendants of the Macedon of Philip and Alexander the Great, and of the Romans, by their being so ready to help him preach the gospel in the spirit of the gospel, appealed especially to Paul's great evangelistic soul. In "He that began a good work in you will perfect it (God deserts no task till it is finished) until the day of Jesus Christ," Paul uses the past as a springboard of prayer for the future. After generously giving thanks for the strong things in the church, he prays for their mutual love, the lack of which is probably their greatest weakness. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that you may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Thus Paul waters his epistle with a prayer of six items. He prays that they may be a loving, knowing, discerning, sincere, inoffensive, fruitful people. Love is the bud that opens out into the others. As one without sight cannot discern color, so one without love cannot be sensitive to the wishes and the rights of his brethren, and "approve the things that are excellent." Love, illuminating reason to see truly and quickly what hurts or offends the one loved, can heal the disunion in Philippi. With loveless hearts, Christians cannot think lovely thoughts and do lovely deeds. Only by

sincere love abounding “yet more and more in all knowledge and discernment,” not by sheer effort of intellect and strength of will, are the deep urges of the natural man to be controlled. From this heavenly prayer, may we not all learn how to pray for and live with our friends? Spiritual dwarfs do not pray that others may become spiritual giants. The Supernatural in the Natural As Paul in his Roman prison reviews his strange, dramatic life since his arrest in Jerusalem—the murderous Jews, the “law’s delays” before the Romans, his appeal to Caesar, the perilous shipwreck and deadly viper on Malta; remembers his disappointments, sufferings, and the numerous times it looked as if his career had received a fatal blow—to encourage them he writes: “Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word without fear.”

Paul thinks how the soldiers whom he met in prison at Caesarea have helped prepare for his fruitful work in Nero’s bodyguard and “Caesar’s household”; thinks how his bonds have emboldened others, even some with wrong motives, to be more active in the preaching denied him, thus building up the church in general; thinks how divine purpose threads through the tangled affairs of earth, and how God’s providences, like some languages, can be read only backward, and then not in fragments for they all “work together for good.” Thus thinking, he realizes that only God knows when a man in chains will reach farther than if left at liberty, and rejoices that God has trusted him with persecution and sorrow, for what happens to him, if Christ be proclaimed, matters not. He remembers that when the ark of God was captured by the Philistines, Dagon, their god, fell (1 Samuel 5:1-5). The many cases in the Bible of God’s working in and through men, good and bad—the supernatural in the natural—have nothing to show more illuminating and edifying than the lives of Joseph and Paul. Recall what Joseph suffered through his unnatural brothers, and hear him tell them many years later in Egypt: “As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day” (Genesis 50:20). Unto this day, God’s government has not changed. But only men today who have the faith of Joseph and Paul can have their God. They did not understand it all, even as we do not. But faith fulfilled in experience was sufficient for them, and it must be for us. No man who believes in God, or even observes nature, can ever doubt anything just because its roots reach down into mystery. This “study” closes with invincible Paul of the evangelistic mind, in spite of everything, triumphantly shouting: “This shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ . . . in nothing shall I be put to shame.”

QUESTIONS 1. As used by Paul, what does the word, “saint,” mean?

2. Describe Scriptural church government.
3. How old should a church be before it undertakes evangelistic work?
4. Give the substance of Paul’s prayer for the Philippians.
5. Why is brotherly love of such vital importance in Christian living?
6. As used in this article, what is the meaning of the phrase, “the supernatural in the natural”?

7. Show that Paul's view of life enabled him to rejoice in all of his extreme persecutions and sufferings.
8. Show that Joseph (Genesis 37:1-36, Genesis 38:1-30, Genesis 39:1-23, Genesis 40:1-23, Genesis 41:1-57, Genesis 42:1-38, Genesis 43:1-34, Genesis 44:1-34, Genesis 45:1-28, Genesis 46:1-34, Genesis 47:1-31, Genesis 48:1-22, Genesis 49:1-33, Genesis 50:1-26) possessed this same view of God's sovereign government of the world.
9. In this field of thought, what does the sentence, "God writes straight with crooked lines," mean to you?

03.03. LESSON 3

LESSON 3 As Paul faced possible execution by Rome, he wrote the Philippians: "Through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." Paul was so entirely devoted to Christ that he had a holy indifference as to whether he served him by living, or by dying. Greek scholars say that "supplication" and "supply of the spirit" are so intimately related that they are virtually one, as if Paul said, "As your prayers ascend, the Spirit will descend." In the same circumstances and about the same time, Paul wrote Philemon: "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." Who can think that Paul was in error, or insincere, when he wrote his friends that prayer and the Holy Spirit would effect his courage and imprisonment? Why did he think that God hears such prayer and "supplieth . . . the Spirit?" (Galatians 3:5). He knew that availing prayer and the workings of the Spirit were much older than his Bible. Remember, Paul also wrote the Philippians: "These things which ye . . . heard and saw in me, these things do."

Life or Death

Some men, balancing the comparative desirability of life and death find difficulty in deciding which is preferable. For a worldling it, sooner or later, is a choice between two evils. Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be," is the classic literary example. To Hamlet, the disadvantages of living, or dying, were so evenly matched that he, true to his basic weakness of character, could not decide, and consequently continued to be dominated by circumstances. Voltaire, a French philosopher and skeptic of two centuries ago, said that he hated life and dreaded death. How different from Paul! To him, neither life nor death was evil. Both were so good that in thinking of a choice of either against the other, he was "in a strait betwixt the two." To depressed Christians of any time, Paul's, "For to me, to live, is Christ, and to die is gain," is a great tonic. Paul was telling the Philippians, if he were freed from prison, he would continue to live a life dead to the flesh in order that Christ might still live in, and express himself through, him; but, if he were executed, instead of serving him on earth in privation and suffering, he would be enjoying him in heaven, which would be "very far better." Christ's living in Paul made his life on earth and his life to come in heaven one continuous, undivided life. He was so enlived with Christ, as a graft with the root, that he was happy serving him on earth, happier in the thought of enduring death that he might go to him beyond death, and happiest in the hope of being with him forever in heaven. To depart was better for him, but since his staying on earth was more needful for them, he, Christlike, was willing to stay.

Paul had already been "caught up into Paradise" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4), and his ignorance as to whether or not his body went along is proof that life apart from the body may continue, as a watch continues to run, removed from the case. The passageway from earth to heaven, the outer and the inner mansions of God's house, is a very short corridor. The great romantic adventure of death is a new stage in the progress of union and communion with Christ. Paul knows nothing of either purgatory or soul-sleeping. To him death, ushering a Christian into the immediate presence of

Christ, is comparable to a change of address. But what can men without the Bible know about death and its gain? Socrates said to the judge who condemned him to death: "If it is true that the souls of just men know felicity after death, let me die, not once, but many times." One of the last things he said to his friends as the hemlock did its deadly work was: "The time has come for us to part—for me to die and for you to live—but which of us is going to a better thing is uncertain. Socrates, one of the very best pagan minds of all time, died like a philosopher, but without Paul's living hope and certain gain. The fuel which fed the fire that burned so steadily and brightly in Paul is not to be found among natural men.

Christian Unity

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel: and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition" (Php 1:27-28). This exhortation consists of three pleas: first, that their conduct be consistent with, and worthy of, the Christian calling; second, that in unity of life, they all stand solidly together, a compact body like the historic "Macedonian Phalanx," in their fight against the world; third, that they be courageous and fearless of soul, for since both sides cannot win a war, their present success is a Sign of the enemy's final defeat.

Need it be said that, though all Christians are required to be absolute in their commitment to all fundamental Christian doctrine, conformity and mechanical sameness in secondary matters are not required. Indeed, the manifold diversity of nature and condition found among Christians make such conformity impossible. Furthermore, it is undesirable, because these dissimilarities provide brethren who love each other ideal conditions for mutual study, edification and growth. Christian unity is organic unity in diversity.

Twin Gifts The close of this chapter throws light on the problem, why do good men like Paul suffer. It teaches that both faith in Christ and suffering for Christ are divine gifts "granted" unto men. That suffering is a privilege and an opportunity is a hard lesson for us. Nevertheless, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Suffering for Christ makes men patient, kind, compassionate, and neighborly. Had Paul suffered no thorn in his flesh, we would miss the mellowness, the gentle pleading, and the tender wooing that quiver throughout his writings. He, like his adored Master, has a heart as large as his head. In Philippians, as is usual with him, his heart is so full that he cares to keep back nothing. "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake."

QUESTIONS 1. How effective does Paul think prayer is?

2. Does he think that the Holy Spirit will help him to live aright in his trying circumstances?

3. Explain in its setting Paul's "in a strait betwixt the two."

4. What consideration made Paul willing to live on earth longer?

5. Contrast Paul's view of death with Hamlet's, with Voltaire's, and with Socrates', respectively.

6. Show that Paul's experience of being "caught up into Paradise" proves that man's soul may live apart from his body.

7. What linked Paul's life on earth and his life to follow in heaven into one harmonious, happy whole?
8. What does the statement, "Christian unity is organic unity in diversity," mean?
9. What benefits should Christians get from their sufferings?

03.04. LESSON 4

LESSON 4 By being more specific in the opening of Php 2:1-30 than he was in the general exhortation for unity near the close of Php 1:1-30, Paul discloses what was amiss at Philippi. The nature and fervency of this prolonged exhortation is evidence that legitimate differences about secondary things and personal matters were needlessly disturbing the peace of the church. Their mishandling such things, rather than the things themselves, was the chief trouble.

Giving relatively small things more prominence than they merit, and wrangling over them, always causes weakness and sin in a church. With Christian treatment, many “important things” soon become very unimportant. When saints agree on essentials, let them beware of dissension over incidentals. Moreover, we all need superhuman wisdom in order to distinguish between supplementary and contradictory things. “If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Honest study of the Bible and believing prayer are indispensable for a spiritual, functioning church.

Discord at Philippi In spite of all his troubles, Paul comes through Php 1:1-30 rejoicing, and encouraging the Philippians, “Soldiers of the cross, shoulder to shoulder”; yet his joy is not complete. He writes: “Make full my joy, that ye may be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Note how affection delights to repeat and linger). In tenderness he pleads that if their experience in Christ is real and has power to stir the heart and to move the will; if they find love, consolation, fellowship, and compassion; if they can be entreated at all, they do “nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others” (Php 2:1-4). When the Philippians read this, could they fail to see that though the gospel had delivered them from Satan’s dominion, it had not taken them beyond the range of his temptations? fail to see that pride and selfishness were the cause of their disunion and of Paul’s exhortation? Could they fail to realize that the stubborn pride of nature must be broken down before grace can really be received as grace, and that only the lowly-minded can be like-minded? In the beginning man fell through pride, and he must be restored through humility. Christ’s first beatitude is, “Blessed are the poor in spirit (self-renounced); for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” If love is the summit of Christianity, humility is its foundation. The gate of life is as low as it is narrow. Christian humility springs, basically, from man’s realizing that without the grace of God he is hopelessly lost in time and in eternity. Self-sufficient men cannot live the Christian life. “To be Christless is to be lifeless.”

Christ’s Essential Glory

“Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God. . . emptied himself; . . . and being in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.” Just before his arrest Christ prayed: “Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). Since Christ retained his essential glory and was still God during his sojourn, on earth, it was only the heavenly glory and divine prerogatives of which he emptied himself. In him met all the

attributes of the Godhead and all the perfections of manhood. He was God-man, the first but not the last, of a new order of life in the universe. As God he “emptied himself.”

Christ's Acquired Glory

“Wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” A sketch of Christ's history runs: essential glory of the Godhead from all eternity, humanity redeemed by his service on earth, and return to his original glory with the Father plus the acquired glory for having saved a lost world. This is the high exaltation of our text. Earned, double exaltation for Christ and undeserved redemption for man! When Christ went back to heaven after his dive down to lowest humiliation on earth, he took mankind, to him a salvaged priceless treasure, on his shoulder with him. This acquired glory is the glory he shares with his bride now and evermore. The grand argument of Hebrews 2:1-18 involves this consummate truth.

Since as eternal God, Christ could not be exalted, only as Mediator was his exaltation possible. Therefore his mediatory name, his saving name, “Jesus,” the name Gabriel gave him before his birth to be worn forever, is “the name” that every tongue shall confess as “Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Faithless Speculations

Paul knew that discord about secondary things could not exist among the Philippians after they possessed the mind of Christ; he knew that their friction grew out of the fact that some of them were not truly converted from self unto Christ; he knew also that the way to get them actually to give Christ precedence over self, thus becoming able to count others better than themselves, was to hold Christ up before them in all his unselfishness as an example. This explains how this great scripture, which has caused so much useless and destructive speculation down through the centuries about the divine-human nature of Jesus, got into this informal letter. Probably the opposite extremes of these speculations are Unitarianism and Mariolatry: the former robs Christ of his deity, and the latter ascribes deity to a woman. Paul did not intend these verses to become a battleground, in the realm above human understanding, for theological disputation; he used them as practical, powerful persuasion.

If all Christians could have always divested themselves of the pride of learning, admitted that “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Timothy 3:16), and in faith accepted Christ as God-man without trying to explain him, ambitious, divisive heresies about his person could not have arisen. Christianity still suffers from the pride of scholarship and intellectualism.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the earnest exhortation at the first of Php 2:1-30 reveal about conditions in the church at Philippi?
2. How may a failure to distinguish between supplementary and contradictory things cause sinful disunity in a church?
3. How may Christians acquire wisdom to make this difficult distinction?

4. Why is it that only the lowly-minded can be like-minded?
5. What is the real, deep basis of Christian humility?
6. For what purpose did Paul introduce the great passage dealing with Christ's timeless, personal history?
7. In what manner has the passage been desecrated and made to serve an unholy purpose?
8. Distinguish between Christ's essential glory and his acquired glory.
9. Can all "the mystery of godliness" be resolved by man?

03.05. LESSON 5

LESSON 5 When Julius Caesar was stabbed to death by Roman conspirators, his friend Mark Antony, bent on revenge, made an oration over the body to citizens in the market place of Rome. As the climax of his politic eulogy, he uncovered the mutilated corpse and feelingly spoke in vivid detail of the many wounds, suffered by Caesar as their benefactor. According to his design, the citizens were aroused to frenzy for vengeance on the conspirators. Does not this illustrate Christ's strategy of emptying and humbling himself even unto death with pierced and disfigured body? Can you think of anything more profoundly moving than the mangled, bloody body of your best friend who died trying to help you? What a wrench the very thought gives you! Remember Christ did not have to come to earth at all; nor die after he came. And might he not have died in the friendly home at Bethany? Or in any other way he chose? Nay. Only the cross could give him power to subdue and save men. When men are tempted to question the power of the cross, let them read Paul's, "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God," to the Corinthians, over whom the power of Grecian rhetoric and philosophy had cast a spell. Or let them try to imagine what the world was before Christ died, or what it would be today if he had never died. Cannot men learn that they at least owe it to themselves to give the cross of Christ a trial by faith, and see what happens. "There is. . . wonderworking pow'r in the blood." As Antony correctly foresaw Roman reaction to Caesar's wounds, so Christ by his cruel, vicarious death purposes to kindle men to fiery enthusiasm for him. Wherein lies the fault that not more Christians are so enkindled? Paul was. In gratitude all should be constrained to love, stoop, suffer, serve, and save lest men go unsaved and Christ be disappointed. This is God's ideal character as fulfilled in Christ, which none can ever attain apart from him.

"Your Own Salvation"

According to the book of Acts, Luke helped Paul plant the church at Philippi, and apparently remained a few years. Paul also revisited Philippi a few times before he wrote Philippians. For a few years before the book was written, however, neither Paul nor Luke had been in the city. In the book the church appears somewhat depressed. Paul affectionately reminds them of their obedience when he was with them that he may more effectively exhort: "Now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12). With all this in view, the conviction that the church was suffering from having depended too much on human help, and that in the absence of Paul and Luke it was taking its opportunities and obligations too lightly, is almost unavoidable. That the church lacked unity and some of the members were quarreling among themselves would lower its efficiency, elders included, and discourage their planning, working, disciplining, praying, paying, and suffering as they should. When personal grievances must be reconciled or difficult decisions made or intricate problems solved in a church, it is always easy to rely too much on noted preachers and teachers. It is God's will, and therefore to the best interests of a congregation, that congregational matters be handled from within.

Paul wants them to realize that their connection with God is so close and personal that his or Luke's presence, however desirable and seemingly useful, is not necessary; that when opportunities or difficulties arise in the congregation, since his absence throws them more directly upon God, they should with trembling earnestness and anxiety, lest they fail in duty, assume, not shirk, their responsibilities. He is saying to Philippi what he had already written Corinth: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." He expects them to feel their direct relationship to God, and that "Each man must bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5), of opportunity, responsibility, and accountability. To realize that we must account to God individually for what we indifferently fail to learn, to do, and to become is a mighty inducement and encouragement to move us to work out our "own salvation with fear and trembling."

God Works in Christians

Paul has told the Philippians that God will continue the good work he began in them (Php 1:6). In this supplementary verse, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you," he puts side by side the divine and the human works of redemption that they may realize how vital their part in this joint work, which God makes possible but not easy for either himself or them, really is. Co-laborers with God! Who would not tremble!

What Paul uses to stir Christians to vehement earnestness, theologians again have turned into a battlefield for theorizers. No theory has ever been advanced that explains the apparent contradiction between God's predestination and man's freedom, yet Paul here, and Peter on Pentecost, preach both, not to puzzle men, but to make them humble and earnest. This verse, addressed to Christians, teaches them that they can do nothing toward their sanctification without God, for God first works in what they work out. God works primarily, therefore they can work secondarily. "Apart from me ye can do nothing," said Christ. On the other hand, God does nothing without the willing cooperation of Christians. However, their work can never supersede or make superfluous God's perpetual workings.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Christ choose to die by crucifixion rather than by some less painful and shameful form of death?
2. How does the funeral of Julius Caesar illustrate the strategy of Christ's death?
3. What does Paul's statement that "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God" mean?
4. Why are men, even some Christian men, so indifferent to Christ's vicarious sufferings?
5. In what sense do men work out their own salvation?
6. How is it that men can neither save themselves nor be saved without, or in despite of, themselves?
7. Did either Peter or his audience on Pentecost understand intellectually how men who slew Christ "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23) could ye be murderers?
8. Explain the statement that "Congregational matters should be handled from within."

9. Are Christians accountable to God for truth they do not try to learn, for duty they neglect to do, and for failure to grow?

03.06. LESSON 6

LESSON 6 On the background of self-exaltation and consequent dissension at Philippi, Paul, as we saw in the preceding “study,” throws the portrait of Christ in his extreme self-renunciation and consequent, pre-eminent exaltation. He paints this picture in order to add power to his great appeal, “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” As Christ’s deep self-effacement and obedience even unto the cross was the bloody path he trod to glory and exaltation, so men who are to share his triumph must start, paradoxically, downward as he did. They must lose their lives in order to find them.

We also saw that Christians in working out their salvation, since they already have justification as a gift through the merit of Christ’s death, are not working for justification. Rather, in gratitude to him who justified them and in distrust of self to live worthily, they depend on the triune God, who is working in them, to provide “sanctification of the Spirit” as he did justification—blood for sinners and enabling power for saints. God’s workings in men, as in nature, exclude miracles, but include human collaboration. In all respects, men are basically dependent creatures; apart from God, they can do no more to justify or to sanctify themselves than they can to feed themselves bodily.

Note that Paul expects to correct the personal, local shortcomings at Philippi by an appeal to the universal, fundamental principles of Christianity—little things to be settled on big principles. He thinks that obedience to God and dependence on God as practiced by Christ will right everything. The essence of human sin has ever been man’s rejection of his creaturehood and his foolish desire to be wise and independent like God (See Genesis 3:4-6). God proposes in Christianity to bring man to a realization of the distance between himself and his Creator that he may be returned to the status of a dependent creature, and live as he was created and conditioned to live.

“The Mind of Christ”

“Do all things without murmurings and questionings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Php 2:14-16). The roots of this passage lie in, “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Php 2:5). And inasmuch as it is a picture of Christ, it shows what having the mind of Christ means. The language, being unlimited, forbids complaining about anything whatsoever. Instead of questioning life’s mysteries and contradictions, and God’s providences, saints with the mind of Christ pray as he did in Gethsemane, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.” All murmuring is treason against the mind of Christ.

These verses prune personal character that more fruit may be borne. That the church, in a dark and dead world, give light and save life, is its primary purpose and mature fruit. When Christians keep busy “holding forth the word of life,” they have little taste and time for petty quibbling and quarreling. As the color and fragrance of flowers, according to naturalists, are to attract bees that carry pollen to fertilize other flowers, so Christians are beautiful and attractive that the pollen of Christ may fertilize other lives.

Paul— (Php 2:16-18) In the rest of Php 2:1-30, Paul names and characterizes himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus as men worthy of imitation because they have the mind of Christ. He wrote the Corinthians: “Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). To these Philippians he writes: “The things which ye saw in me, these things do” (Php 4:9). In our immediate scripture his Christ-like self-abnegation is truly amazing. It is as if Christ instead of Paul were doing the living. Indeed, this is the way he explains his life to the Galatians: “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). Humble men do not think meanly of themselves; they just do not think of themselves at all.

Paul here tells them that his sufferings and possible execution are but the drink-offering that forms an insignificant part of their burnt-offering of service. Note the unity in Christ: Paul in Rome and they in Philippi constitute but one sacrifice. They are his “joy and crown,” and should they fail “in the day of Christ,” it would be irreparable loss for him too. The passage closes: “I joy, and rejoice with you all: and in the same manner do ye also joy, and rejoice with me.” This chapter is full of rejoicing in lowly service.

Timothy — (Php 2:19-24)

Paul does not know the future, but he hopes that his sending Timothy to Philippi, to be followed soon by his own coming, is in line with the will of God. In all literature, no more elevated friendship than that between Paul and Timothy exists. Their both having the mind of Christ accounts for their selfless likemindedness; each like the Good Shepherd has a true shepherd-heart. On this occasion at least, Paul has no other man to send who has such “small regard for his dinner” and self-advancement, and who can therefore so well heal their diseases. Self so successfully squirms itself into our religion that death to self is still a rare thing. Of how many may, “They all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ,” be written today? This, too, is treason against the mind of Christ; he “pleased not himself,” but sought the things of others.

Epaphroditus — (Php 2:25-30) The last of the Christ-like trio is Epaphroditus. The church at Philippi had sent him, one of their number, to Rome with supplies and “news” for Paul. He had fallen “sick nigh unto death,” but now, through God’s mercy well again and no doubt bearing this letter, is going home. As a devoted son, sick, away from home, is distressed because his mother is grieved on his account, Epaphroditus longs to get back for the comfort of homefolk. Paul writes: “I have sent him . . . that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” How touching, even unto pathos, that Paul feels he has enough sorrow without being indirectly the cause of sorrow to others. A house, even a hired house, that shelters these three is a veritable hothouse of Christian consideration, tenderness and courtesy. Who can doubt that Paul is reducing his, “Walk even as ye have us for an ensample” (Php 3:17), to life for the church at Philippi?

QUESTIONS 1. What does to have the mind of Christ mean?

2. Explain the paradox that one must go down in order to rise.

To what extent are men basically dependent upon God?

4. In what does human sin essentially consist?

5. Why is complaining and murmuring treason against the mind of Christ?

6. What is the chief activity of the church?
7. How does Paul account for his having the mind of Christ?
8. Characterize Timothy and Epaphroditus.
9. For what purpose are the lives of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus brought into the last half of Php 2:1-30?

03.07. LESSON 7

LESSON 7 The general theme of the largely autobiographic book of Philippians is rejoicing. Php 1:30 shows Paul's rejoicing in afflictions occasioned by both worldlings and false brethren; Php 2:1-30 shows his rejoicing in lowly, obscure service, unnoticed by the world; now, Php 3:1-21, which begins, "Finally, my brethren rejoice in the Lord," shows his rejoicing in spite of imperfection because he hopes to become a perfect man when he receives at Christ's coming a risen, spiritual body, "conformed to the body of his (Christ's) glory."

It may seem odd, near the center of the book, to find the word, "finally." But the same thing is found in both of the Thessalonian letters. Romans closes with a postscript. Is it strange that a man who could write, "Out of many afflictions and anguish of heart . . . with many tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4), and "My little children, I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19), and who warns these Philippians "even weeping," finds tearing himself loose from his weak, misguided children in the Lord and bringing his letter to an actual close difficult? Tenderness and strength are not incompatible. No Confidence in the Flesh

Paul teaches in many scriptures that the flesh and the spirit are mutually antagonistic and exclusive. His depraved, self-sufficient "natural man," who "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14) and "the flesh," which is so corrupt that it must be born again, are equivalents. A Christian cannot carry "the flesh" with him on his pilgrimage through this world.

Obviously, Paul in writing, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision: for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," has Judaizers in mind. Some scholars think that this warning rather than the exhortation to rejoice is what he is pleased to teach repeatedly for their safety. The passage consists, first, of three stern epithets, which characterize legalists: they are profane dogs that tear asunder the body of Christ, carnal evil workers, and their circumcision ("concision"), since the inauguration of Christianity, is no more than heathen gashings and mutilations of the body, forbidden by Moses. Then follows a threefold comparison of Judaizers and Christians: the carnal worship of the former is contrasted with the spiritual worship of the latter; their glorying in the law with the glorying of Christians in Christ, and their "concision" with a "circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:11). How utterly unworthy of confidence is the flesh! "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other" (Galatians 2:17).

Scale of Values Upset

"If any man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more." After making this statement, Paul lists seven of his advantages of the flesh—the first four are hereditary and the others are personal acquisitions. In Galatians 2:14, he writes: "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." He might have added that he was born a Roman citizen, and that in both Greek and Hebrew

learning he was highly educated. If any man could plume himself on his pedigree, native endowments, training, ambition, industry, moral integrity, religious drive, and works; and apart from Christ save himself, it was Paul.

“Howbeit . . . I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ.” This passage shows that Paul named his advantages in order to teach what being a Christian means; to teach that having the mind of Christ so upset his scale of values that he counts all his fleshly advantages but refuse. Can words say that meritorious, legal righteousness is incompatible with righteousness by faith in Christ more plainly? More plainly say that confidence in the ability of the flesh to earn righteousness by keeping law must be surrendered before Christ can save? Since the very flesh itself competes with Christ for the soul’s confidence, it must be crucified. The grossest sins of the flesh are no more contrary to the principles of Christianity than is the spurious righteousness of the flesh. “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God . . . and they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7-8). The statement is not “do not,” but “cannot,” please God. Who can have confidence in the flesh? And yet, it is much to be feared that some of us Christians are not so truly converted from self to Christ, from flesh to Spirit, as greatly to upset our scale of values. Had Paul not been so upset, what kind of a Christian would he have been?

Paul’s dying to every fleshly ambition and descending from the Pharisees, the popular Jewish sect, to the lowly “sect of the Nazarenes,” of whom probably three-fourths were slaves, is sufficient proof that he possessed the mind of Christ, who descended from highest heaven to lowest earth. With Christ and Paul in view, one might wonder if heaven is not for men who fail on earth.

Letting the World Go By The statement that the world owes most to those who renounce it, contribute little to its success, participate little in its activities, and reap few of its honors may seem false. But a little study of the Bible with the right key shows it to be true. Of course, Christ is the supreme example of this extraordinary truth. But glance at three men who probably stand next to Christ as mankind’s benefactors— Abraham, Moses and Paul. Abraham lived a full century among the Canaanites in a tent, confessing himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim. Moses apparently renounced the throne of the Pharaohs, forsook Egypt, and lived forty years a forgotten man in training for forty more years of service in the Wilderness. As we have just seen, Paul counted all that the world could offer but “refuse,” and reaped chains and death. Think of the world’s debt to these three! With a fulcrum and a lever long enough, Archimedes said he could lift the earth. But the fulcrum must have been outside the earth. God’s people are always “A people that dwelleth alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9)—a peculiar people who are content to let the world go by.

QUESTIONS 1. In what sense does Paul use the phrase, “the flesh”?

2. What relationship exists inherently between the flesh and the Spirit?
3. Give the substance of Paul’s contrast between legalists and Christians.
4. Summarize Paul’s attainments according to the flesh.
5. What caused Paul to lose all confidence in such exceeding wealth of the flesh?

6. Could Paul have been “born of the Spirit” and lived the Christian life without this upset of values?
7. What Is the difference between the righteousness “of the law” and the righteousness “through faith in Christ”?
8. Is the expression, “worldly Christian,” self-contradictory?
9. How do the lives of Abraham, Moses, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, all, throw light on this eighth question?

03.08. LESSON 8

LESSON 8

Some twenty-five years after Paul suffered the loss of all things in becoming a Christian, years filled with extreme hardship and drastic ostracism, he did not rue his choice, for he wrote: "I . . . count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ. . . that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death" (Php 3:8-10). As Paul progressively learned "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," in whom all divine and human virtues, combine, and to whom all sheaves bow, Christ grew in value to him, and he became better and better pleased with his bargain.

Although Paul wrote these words within prison walls, they are remarkable for their freedom and elevation. Later, when he faced certain execution, he wrote for Timothy's encouragement: "I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound." In his conversion, Paul made his irrevocable choice, which brought him the inevitable assurance of Christ's companionship, comfort, and compensation for all loss. Before Damascus, he thought that Christ was a grand impostor, but upon his conversion he and the living Christ became such fast friends, with common interests and purposes, that one spirit sufficed for both. More and more, he experienced contact with the live Christ.

Paul's conversion did not consist primarily of a set of new convictions, but, deeper than that, of a new person. With the apostle's increasing knowledge and appreciation of his new Friend, their friendship ripened into an intimacy, steadfastness, and richness far beyond the range of human friendship. All historic facts and intellectual knowledge about Christ and the Bible that do not bring men to Christ himself are but splendid, delusive ignorance which aggravates their doom (John 5:39-40). To how many pretended friends does Christ say: "I never knew you; depart from me"? No matter what men profess, without personal acquaintance and living experience with Jesus, they gain naught and lose all. With it, though they possess naught besides, they have all.

Christianity Spans Two Worlds

Paul had embarked upon an enterprise so vast and awarding that two worlds, time and eternity, are required for its realization. He needed to know Christ, "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings," which would enable him to live while in the flesh worthily of his ambitious undertaking, "becoming conformed unto his (Christ's) death"----that is, Christ's bodily crucifixion would be re-enacted in his Christian life by his crucifying "the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." The fact that suffering with Christ is the criterion of real fellowship with him should reconcile us to our sufferings for his sake. Thus far, the passage deals with a Christian in this world. The next verse, "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead," leaps beyond this world. Paul thinks that no suffering for Christ, even unto violent death like Christ's, can be too high a price to pay for the assurance of getting his body back "in the resurrection of the just."

Before his imprisonment, Paul wrote Corinth, "I die daily." He said that his work for Christ and his "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4:10) were killing him. But if he died in service, his death would but speed his race unto perfection, even as Christ was made "perfect through suffering"; and, since death is "to depart and be with Christ" (Php 1:23), it would not disrupt his friendship with Jesus. Moreover at Christ's return, he would come with him and get his risen body, "conformed to the body of his (Christ's) glory," to live in again. A Christian's death is just another step in the progress of a closer union with Christ. A man "in Christ" can suffer no defeat unless Christ suffers defeat. Christ turns dreadful death into gain. "O death, where is thy sting?" The attainment of "the resurrection from the dead" is dependent on fellowship with Christ. Fellowship and identity with Christ lead Christians through a life of conformity to Christ's death, either to being "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) at his coming, or to death and resurrection. Either of these wedds the two worlds and leaves the warm, fragrant, beautiful friendship with Jesus begun here below to be continued in eternity.

Imperfect, Yet Perfect

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be I may lay hold on that for which I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" (Php 3:12). Paul understood the nature of his encounter with Christ; he knew that Christ was weaving him into a mighty, far-flung pattern whose importance justified his perpetual best and all by way of cooperation. This is why he counts everything loss for Christ, and why he holds so unflinchingly to his threefold program: "I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here is the fixed concentration, the solid contentment over losses and sacrifices, and the quivering, youthful expectancy of a strong, honest man who has perfectly turned away from his dead self to the live Christ.

"Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded: for if in anything ye are otherwise minded, this shall God also reveal unto you: only whereunto we have attained, by this same rule let us walk." Just after protesting his perfection, why does Paul now place himself in a class of perfect Christians? He is but recognizing the difference between his attitude of perfect acceptance of and commitment to God's purpose in Christ, and his imperfect cooperation in its accomplishment. His reach exceeds his grasp; he sees things he wishes to do, but cannot. God has always done his work through imperfect servants; earth at best is but twilight. Paul's perfect Christians are therefore perfect in attitude, but imperfect in life and service. They are both perfect and imperfect at the same time. But some Christians do not have even this perfect attitude. On Christ's deep moral principle that, "If any man willeth to do his (God's) will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17), Paul reminds such Christians that they are dealing with a moral God, who requires moral integrity in his servants; tells them that, if they will be honest with God and continue to obey him faithfully, he will see that they grow into fuller knowledge and implementation of Christianity. No more than do sinners, do Christians have to do everything.

QUESTIONS 1. Why did Paul never regret becoming a Christian?

2. Distinguish between knowing about Christ and knowing him.
3. How was Christ's death re-enacted in Paul's life?

4. What is the criterion of fellowship with Christ?
5. What is it to know in this life the power of Christ's resurrection?
6. Only on what one condition could a faithful Christian ever suffer final defeat?
7. State Paul's threefold spiritual program.
8. In what sense are Christians at the same time both imperfect and perfect?
9. Why need no honest man upon learning of Christ ever have doubts about his genuineness?

03.09. LESSON 9

LESSON 9 In the first part of Php 3:1-21, Paul says the goal and prize of his strenuous race is to be dead to the world, as Christ was, that he may attain the Christian resurrection; says nothing the world can offer has any interest for him. Christ, even to Paul, who knows him so well, is as a fabulously rich mine, just opened. That the mine can never be worked unto depletion is a priceless asset, especially to elderly Christians. Whatever a Christian's progress, he is but a novice. "Nothing can keep old saints out of heaven long."

Paul thinks his is the correct attitude to which all Christians should aspire. He knows that many do not have it up to his measure, but, since to become Christians without some measure is impossible, he says a Christian is on the right road, and if he but has the will to walk in it, God stands pledged to "reveal," as he needs them, increasing knowledge and the strength to obey (Php 3:15). "Whereunto we (Paul includes himself) have attained, by the same rule let us walk" (Php 3:16). This has direct bearing on the lack of unity among the Philippians: since they had reached fundamental common ground in being baptized into Christ, they should learn and grow together harmoniously until all "attain unto the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man . . . grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:1-15). May I add a personal note? I have been trying to teach the Bible for more than fifty years. To my knowledge I do not teach anything now that contradicts anything I have ever taught. What I knew at first has been supplemented, but it has been neither discarded nor discounted. Christianity throughout is a self-consistent, expanding, mounting highway that opens out into eternity. No traveler need ever get lost, run into dead ends, remain on the same spiritual level (not even Paul), or be estranged from his brethren. It is the only way without blasted hopes and wrecked careers—the only way of gain.

"Who Mind Earthly Things"

"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Php 3:17-19). In asking the Philippians to unite in imitating him, Paul alludes to their disunity again, and offers his example as a slip for resetting. Seemingly, this severe language is descriptive of a condition in the church at large rather than of the actual condition in Philippi. Though Paul has often warned them against such a condition, the Philippians are still earthly enough, however, to need a stern warning and this intimate, tearful appeal. In this passage, Paul has in mind both Judaism and Antinomianism. Judaism, declaring itself to be perfected Christianity, was in reality an insidious disease eating out its very heart. Antinomians, arguing, "We continue in sin that grace may abound," perverted Christian liberty into license, and, "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," debauched the church openly. "Whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame" fit, as gloves do hands, the ignorant, wicked boast of nominal Christians who say that God's grace makes their morality and decency

unnecessary. Jewish legalism and Gentile licentiousness were vipers that, had not God raised up Paul to do them heroic battle, would have, humanly speaking, destroyed the church in its cradle. Paul's campaign against these twins, that perpetually "creep and intrude, and climb into the fold," restrained, but did not slay them. Ritualism and Carnality, in modern dress, are inexorable foes of the church still, exceedingly strong and perilous. Can you visualize the weeping Paul in his prison dictating this letter? The emotional content of Paul's soul is almost frightening at times, as when he writes that he had great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart because of the Jews' unbelief, and could wish himself accursed for their sake (Romans 9:2-3). Paul wrote with tears in his pen, and spoke with tears in his tone. Should not his "example" prime our hearts and dry eyes? How good that God, when he made us, did not forget to put in a heart!

Citizens of Heaven

After, in tears dooming worldly Christians to "perdition," Paul says to true Christians: "Our citizenship is (not shall be) in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior" (Php 3:20). On this subject Christ says to his disciples: "Take heed lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day (his return) come on you suddenly as a snare: for so shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye . . . that ye may prevail to escape all these things . . . and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34-36). Either sheep or goats; no neutrality.

Beginning with Abraham, God's people have always "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," for while occupied by Satan it cannot be a fit home. Peter's appeal, "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts," has life in it because it turns on this pivotal truth. Since Christians cannot be heavenly minded unless they are conscious of their heavenly citizenship, that they be right at this point, indeed is pivotal. Instead of sojourners settling down and accumulating property, they send things home and collect them to take back with them. Nor do they when sojourning among savages become savages. Of course, having citizenship in heaven does not make rebels on earth; or make people so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly use. According to Christ, they are the salt and the light of the world. As Father and Son and Spirit comprise the divine trinity, so "spirit and soul and body" comprise the human trinity, which is to be "preserved entire . . . at the coming of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). A Christian cannot lose: if he live till Jesus come, he, his body "changed" into "a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44-51), is "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17) to be with him evermore; if he die before Christ return, he, unbodied, goes to a "very better" life with Christ, to await the fashioning anew his body of humiliation like unto Christ's glorified body. A disembodied spirit is not an "entire" man as God made him, and as he shall be again when his redemption from Satan's ruin is completed. As Paul's faith, "he is able," satisfied him, like faith must satisfy us. Faith is the only coin we have that will buy this knowledge, hope and comfort.

QUESTIONS

1. What does the statement, no matter what a Christian's maturity he is but a novice, mean?
2. Dilate upon the statement that Christianity is a self-consistent, expanding, mounting highway that opens out into eternity.
3. How did Judaism eat the heart out of Christianity?

4. How did Antinomianism turn the “grace of God Into lasciviousness”?
5. What do you think of ritualism and licentiousness as perpetual enemies of the church?
6. Comment upon the emotional quality of Paul’s soul.
7. In what sense are Christians citizens of heaven?
8. Name the essential parts of the indestructible human trinity.
9. Upon what contingency may Christians miss the resurrection?

03.10. LESSON 10

LESSON 10

“Wherefore,” the first word in the last chapter of Philippians means that what follows grows out of what precedes. Paul has just assured the Philippians that their acceptance with God was complete when they took Christ as their Savior; that their life as citizens of heaven, seeking “after a city which is to come” (Hebrews 13:12-14), while it would make them alien to earth, would culminate in the perfection of their redemption from Satan’s devastation, at Christ’s coming, by their becoming “able-bodied” citizens with bodies like Christ’s risen, glorious body. From this premise, he draws an eightfold, hortative conclusion: “Wherefore,” be steadfast, be united, be joyous, be forbearing, be prayerful, be thankful, be peaceful, be imitators of “me.” An impressive “Be-hive”! A Greek wrote before Christ: “Good men weep easily, the better, the easier.” It is not surprising that within five verses Paul weeps over some Christians and rejoices over others. Many are too callous to know much feeling. But Christ sensitizes men and makes them care and feel until, as surroundings dictate, they experience a wide range of emotion. Joy and sorrow are concomitant rather than antagonistic. The “Prince of peace” was “a Man of sorrows.” Paul describes himself as sorrowful, yet always “rejoicing.” That Christians rejoice only, cannot be in this world. Worry, not sorrow, is the kill-joy. The Philippians, “beloved and longed for,” by Paul, his joy and his crown, must not disappoint him, but “stand fast in the Lord.” If more of us preachers and teachers had Paul’s heart and other worldliness, more Christians would say: “Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Unity, Joy, Forbearance

Euodia and Syntyche, possibly baptized ten years before as members of Lydia’s household, and possibly distraught by anxious work for Jesus even as was Martha, are mutually estranged. Women were prominent in this church at first, and, apparently, still are. Does this help account for the excellencies of the church? or for its lack of unity? Prudently avoiding all allusion to the nature of the quarrel, or taking side with either, Paul exhorts them equally to be “of the same mind in the Lord.” To agree religiously out of the Lord would be conspiracy against the Lord. Paul does not mean, of course, that these women try to be alike in gifts and traits of personality, for Christianity does not require mechanical conformity. Too many differences in constitution and circumstances exist between any two people for this to be possible, or even desirable. God cuts each individual after a new pattern. Men as different as John the Baptist and Christ, or as Peter and John, can be “of the same mind in the Lord.” No doctrinal, just personal disagreement, seemingly, is involved. And yet, their wrangling is so damaging that Paul beseeches an unnamed yokefellow, Clement, and the rest of his fellow-workers “to help these women.” Some heathens may be willing to come into the church after they compose their differences. Had these women known that their names would be put down as sowers of “discord among brethren” in a book to be read around the earth until the end of time, think you they would have been so quick to quarrel, or so hard to reconcile? At best, earth-bound life is a foolish, little thing; it is half ridiculous and half pitiful to see how

seriously men take its paltry distinctions and ornaments. Even as we think about Euodia and Syn-tyche, can you imagine how they now feel about their petty strivings in the long ago? For “all flesh is as grass” (See 1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

“Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice.” Not rejoice some times, but all the time. How easy it would be to obey, if this only read, “groan always: again I will say, groan?” Some rebel against God, others sulkily resign to him, but only Christians can always rejoice in him. Apart from the Lord, it is useless for thoughtful men even to try to be habitually cheerful. Much easier than reasoning our troubles away is singing and praying them away. As reading small print tires our eyes, so, without counter-working Christian joy and patience, little, nagging irritants wear us down to fussy impatience and jangling tongues. “Then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

“Let your forbearance be known unto all men.” Do our acquaintances and members of our families know us, in matters of personal opinion and preference, to be forbearing, gentle, reasonable, easy to get along with, and pleasant to have around? Christians should have lovable personalities, and abilities to meet the needs of others. Do not overlook Paul’s discreet precaution in, after naming or identifying several fellow-workers in the congregation, reminding others who might feel slighted that their “names are in the book of life.” None should have felt slighted, of course, but practical Paul knows the weakness of the flesh.

Prayer, Thanksgiving, Peace

It seems that the sentence, “The Lord is at hand,” in this great hortatory passage may be applied doubly as follows: Since Christ stands by and knows all, be steadfast, united, joyous, forbearing; and, since his second coming may occur at any time, being prayerful, thankful, and “patient until the coming of the Lord” (James 5:7-9) will keep you perpetually ready. Thus Paul mightily persuades Christians to be citizens of heaven and pilgrims of earth.

“In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God . . . shall guard your hearts.” Prayer is cooperation with God in the spiritual realm as our daily work is in the physical realm. God releases energies from his person into the world through prayer as well as through gravitation. When in live faith Christians contact the live God, things in both nature and religion happen. Dealing with supernatural forces, they may expect supernatural results. In childlike simplicity, Paul actually believes what he writes and is at peace, anxious about nothing. We believe less and are anxious about many things. What a tragedy when the child in us is dead. That you talk to God about small things is evidence of your large faith in him. Christ casts out the unholy trinity of the flesh, fear, worry, and anxiety. Doubt and worry, not sorrow and trouble, cast out peace. Forgetting about the reasons for things, just make your requests to God and leave results, as you do in seeding your field, to him who feeds sparrows and marks their fall. As prayer advances, care recedes. A beautiful and fruitful union is formed when prayer and praise wed.

QUESTIONS 1. What is the import of “wherefore,” the first word in Php 4:1-23?

2. Why does having citizenship in heaven make one a sojourner on earth?

3. With respect to what kind of things may Christians compromise, and with respect to what kind may they not compromise?
4. Suggest two meanings for the sentence, "The Lord is at hand."
5. How is it that sorrow and rejoicing may be concomitant?
6. In what respect are prayer and gravitation similar?
7. How may Christians banish worry and anxiety from their lives?
8. How and why does Christ sensitize men?
9. How should the truth that earthly interests when compared with heavenly interests are nothing show up in our daily lives?

03.11. LESSON 11

LESSON 11 Being incurably religious by creation and unable to get away from the sense of God, in some way all men pray. The Christian way is for men to pray to their Creator about everything and to be thankful for anything. Christians pray to “the God of peace,” who dispenses peace through his Son, and come to possess “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” This peace, transcending all human philosophy, is Christ’s priceless legacy to his apostles and their converts: “Peace I leave with you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful” (John 14:27). Such peace is possible only to men who trust God far beyond their own understanding to make “all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28). No man can be a Christian (or a gardener either) unless he “consents to apprehend much that he cannot comprehend.” To clinch the teaching and exhorting of this book, Paul offers himself again as an example in thinking, teaching and living. This is like setting before a man of poor appetite a dish to make him hungry. Paul names true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and blameless things as proper subjects for thought. How much do these six adjectives need changing to make them fit our thinking! Had Euodia and Syntyche followed this, would they have fallen out?

Perhaps because the common heathen word for moral excellence was “virtue,” Paul, becoming “all things to all men,” adds: “If there be any virtue, and . . . any praise, think on these things.” Christians need not hesitate to take truth from any man, for it is theirs by right. To the factious Corinthians, Paul had written: “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Christians should not wear the name of preachers as the Corinthians were doing, for they belong to Christ, not to preachers. However, since preachers belong to Christians, whatever truth Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Luther, Wesley, or Campbell teaches belongs to all Christians. But who wants other than truth from any man?

Paul’s Contentment With the arrival of supplies from the Philippians after a considerable interval, Paul’s prison room is fragrant with gratitude and worship as he writes: “I rejoice in the Lord greatly.” How much a simple deed of brotherly kindness means to the great, tender soul! Note his generous spirit and refined courtesy in putting the best possible light on their temporary neglect; and the grace and delicacy with which he lets them know that he has been in want. No matter what else Paul’s character may comprise, he is at least a perfect Christian gentleman.

“I have learned, in whatever state I am, therein to be content. In everything and in all things have I learned the secret. . . both to abound and to be in want.” Who can believe that this self-drawn sketch of Paul with its transparent sincerity and humility gets into his book through his egotism and vanity? Nay. Rather it is God’s chosen way openly to set forth for Christians of all time what he can make of a self-surrendered man, who wholly yields himself to his making, and suffers the evil spirit of the flesh to be cast out.

Paul repeats that he has learned the close secret of contentment. He means that he has come to believe that anything he experiences is by God’s will, and therefore good and usable. Here are the

naked bones of Paul's mature faith and religion. We know him too well to think he means the contentment of indifference and self-complacency. At the time he writes these words, he is content with his body chained to a soldier, for his spirit is at large, ranging the universe. He never writes of doing the best he can "under the circumstances," he is always on top of circumstances, undiscouraged by the ups and downs of life. Suffering and hunger without despondency, and success and abundance without pride characterize him. Since second causes are but God's means, he is ready for anything, at any time, from anywhere. The scale of his life is so exactly balanced between want and abundance that the indicator always points straight up. Paul's contentment must ever be a locked secret to all except those who have his key. When Cicero and Seneca, heathen moralists who had written much on courage and manly virtue, were banished from Rome, they filled the air with complaints and entreaties to be brought home. How incomparably stronger and nobler is Paul.

Paul's Strength

After Paul rises to the level of the greatest of the naturally great men of earth, he continues to rise. In noble purpose, disinterested service, moral grandeur, living power, and lasting achievement, he rises far above them all. He explains this by humbly saying, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." He realizes that he is not living merely, or mainly, in his own strength. Without the superhuman aid, probably he would be no stronger than Julius Caesar or others. Whether Paul's "him" refers to God, Christ, Spirit, or to all three, the practical meaning is the same, for the three are "one Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 6:4). The Trinity, though it transcends human reason, it is not contrary to it. The Trinity is implicit in the first line of the Bible, for the word "God" is plural. In Genesis 3:15 God promises to send Christ to earth as a man. Isaiah, Joel and others foretell the coming of the Spirit. Christ comes and the Spirit descends upon him at his baptism to abide with him while he stays on earth. During his ministry, Christ has the Spirit without measure (John 3:33), casts out demons "by the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28), and tells his disciples that he must go away before the Spirit can come to take his place permanently ("that he may be with you forever") (John 14:16), as representative of the Godhead on earth (John 16:7-15). In fulfillment of this promise, and according to God's unfolding purpose, the transfer of the Spirit from Christ to his disciples was effected on Pentecost, and perfected Christianity was inaugurated. Throughout Acts and the epistles, the church is "a habitation of God (and Christ) in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

Paul believes he is the nether link of a five-link chain coming down from God—God, Christ, Spirit, Word, Paul. If even one link fails, the chain fails. Since Paul is the only link that can fail, and, since his sole aim is that the triune God express himself through his personality (Galatians 2:20), he knows the chain will hold. This is what gives him his invincible confidence, strength, and peace. With respect to standing in grace and moral growth, God treats all Christians alike. Unless the Philippians have access to the power whence cometh his strength and contentment, and can learn his secret, why need Paul to exhort them to imitate him?

QUESTIONS

1. What does the sentence that Christians cannot know Christian peace unless they continue to 'consent to apprehend many things which they do not comprehend' mean?

2. What would be the effect now, if all leaders in the church could offer themselves as examples in thinking, teaching, and living?
3. Would not Paul's exhorting the Philippians to imitate his life, had he not known they were "strengthened with power through his (God's) Spirit in the inward man" to "do all things," even as he himself was, have been mockery and hypocrisy?
4. In what sense do preachers and books belong to Christians?
5. How may we know that Paul was a gracious, Christian gentleman?
6. Why did Paul never think that he could be and do better in different circumstances?
7. What key did Paul use to unlock the secret of contentment?
8. Is the absence, or the presence, of sorrow and disappointment the more conducive to "the peace of God"?
9. Why did not the Holy Spirit take up his permanent dwelling in Christ's disciples before Pentecost?

03.12. LESSON 12

LESSON 12

We are come to our last “study” in Philippians. The book is eminently Christian because it shows what the Christian religion will do for an earnest man, even when circumstances, humanly speaking, are most unfavorable. The final test of any religion or philosophy is the courage and hope it gives its adherents for the deep needs and heavy burdens of life. It is just to judge both Christianity and idolatry by what they do for men. In this respect Christianity outstrips all other religions and philosophies immeasurably. The book portrays a man, who, instead of being timid, cynical, and despairing as by all human reckoning he should be, is fearless, joyous, ready, and saying, “I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.” Surely, Paul is the best example of what a man, in the strength that God supplies, can take without becoming discouraged and broken in spirit; surely, the best interpretation of his own doctrine: “God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). Paul is ever serene and sober; never gloomy nor gay; always eager and strong. And since he exhorts the Philippians to imitate him, he must know that they have access to the same divine power that sustains him.

Need it be repeated that Paul’s miraculous gifts contributed nothing directly to his moral growth and spiritual character? As all Christians have the opportunity of doing, he learned by the experience of fulfilled faith the secret of letting God by his overruling providence, work out for him either want or abundance as he saw good; learned to see that joy or pain, as God willed, would contribute to his life. Who but God can know infallibly whether in a given case apparent success or failure is better for his child and his church? God has non-miraculous, superhuman wisdom and strength for all Christians (and farmers too) who want them, and are willing to cooperate with him. Paul prays for the Ephesians: “That ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:20-21). A Protest Considered

Some question that the triune God through the medium of, and in conjunction with, his written word gives aid and power to Christians beyond the written word itself, on the ground that they do not see HOW he can do it. If he does not, what is prayer? Does not this protest overlook the truth that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), and take the matter out of the realm of faith altogether? Paul having tested this doctrine in the laboratory of Christian experience for many years, writes the Philippians that he finds it to be true. But he never tries to explain the philosophy of its workings. Indeed, he tells other churches. as he tells the Philippians, that, though it “passeth all understanding” and transcends all human thought, it actually works, and that he knows by verified faith that deliverance, endurance, and strength, according to his need, are unfaillingly at hand; that in the thick of battle, he never finds himself unarmed; that his natural strength is always supplemented and strengthened. With the whole Bible contrary to this protest, how can the doctrine of God’s special providence be incredible? The nature of faith is everywhere the same. Christ’s parables hang by the truth that nature and religion operate on similar principles. The faith

of neither scientists nor Christians can be validated by abstract reasoning. Men of scientific faith, acting upon it, find it verified by the response of nature. Likewise, men of Christian faith, acting upon it, find it verified by the response of Christianity. In both realms, progress and assurance come only by way of the “obedience of faith.” In neither do men get beyond faith and hope as fulfilled in experience. In this way Paul learned his “secret,” and found life and peace. He could be happy anywhere; Nero could be happy nowhere.

Christ invites men only to give his way of life a trial, and see if things do not come out all right. Without argument, he throws down the challenge to faith, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This takes faith in him. Abstract reasoning and formal logic have great, even fatal, limitations. Paul’s life of verified faith in Christ is the true interpretation, demonstration, and vindication of the faith Christ asks, deserves and expects. Faith is life’s most challenging and wonderful achievement.

Christianity at Work When Paul’s foes at Corinth accused him of preaching for money, he, knowing that if the church believed this, his influence for good among them was ended, refuted the slander by refusing all money from them (1 Corinthians 9:1-27). He thanks Philippi eloquently for repeatedly sending to his “need,” yet in such a manner as to show his own relative unconcern about such, and to give the church a blank check signed by his rich God (Php 4:4-19). In the chapter that tells about Paul’s refusing money is his fullest teaching that a preacher of the gospel “should live of the gospel.” In Christian liberty however, lest the gospel suffer harm, he waived this right in Corinth. Paul always preached the gospel in the spirit of the gospel. Preachers especially need to take Paul’s example to heart. They may even use the pulpit, as other men use the bar or the theater, for self-display and gain.

We can understand Paul’s death to the world and his other worldliness only if we understand Christianity. The story of the paralytic in John 5:1-47 is a parabolic representation of Christianity at work. After the cripple manifested a willingness to “be made whole,” Jesus said: “Arise . . . and walk.” And behold! when he tried, he found that supernatural power was being communicated, for he actually could walk, the first step in 38 years. This bodily miracle is symbolic of the supernatural change which takes place in the maimed spirits of men when they, despairing of natural means, are willing to be made whole by the creative life and power of God as he touches and impregnates their broken lives. Of course he uses his written word as essential means, but to mistake means for end is to become encased in forms: and this makes Pharisees, not Christians. Men dead in trespasses and sins by cooperating with God always find themselves enabled to “do all things in him that strengtheneth.” John 5:1-47 continues the parallel between these healings, calls healing the spirit the greater work, and has Christ saying that not the scripture, but he himself gives life (John 5:40). Both creating man in the beginning and re-creating fallen man now are God’s own personal work—Person must contact person, Spirit breathe on spirit. Paul was a man of great natural gifts who gave himself greatly to the triune God’s great redemptive movement. Could the church in Philippi after this letter still be divided and despondent?

QUESTIONS 1. What is the proper test of any religion?

2. Did Christianity step up Paul’s natural strength, and vitalize and energize his personality? or did it weaken his will and initiative, and depersonalize him?

3. Show that the workings of faith in physical nature and in Christianity are similar.
4. Is the nature and power of truth in any realm ever weakened just because said truth transcends human understanding?
5. Why did Paul refuse a salary from Corinth?
6. How does Christ's restoring the paralytic (John 5:1-9) illustrate his restoring the otherwise hopelessly maimed spirits of all men?
7. Can a sinner be born of God without God's imparting spiritual life to him?
8. What is the function of the Scriptures in effecting this impartation of spiritual life? (See John 5:39-40).
9. How is it that Christians today can better understand the constitution, purpose, and practical workings of their religion because the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write so much about himself?

04.00. Studies in Romans

STUDIES IN ROMANS

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04.01. LESSON 1

LESSON 1

Though Romans was written near the close of Paul's missionary ministry, reasonably, because of its being a fuller and more systematic discussion of the fundamentals of Christianity than the other Epistles of the New Testament, it is placed before them. Paul's earliest writings, the Thessalonian letters, written some five years before Romans, reasonably, because they feature Christ's second coming and the end of the age, are placed, save the Pastoral Epistles and Philemon, last of his fourteen Epistles. If Mordecai, without explicit evidence, believed it was like God to have Esther on the throne at a most crucial time (Esther 4:14), why should it be "judged incredible" that God had something to do with this arrangement of his Bible? The theme of the Bible from Eden onward is the redemption of fallen man. Romans begins at man's end of this long, difficult way up from darkness to light, and portrays him as "having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians begins at God's end, and declares that in past eternity before the foundation of the world, God purposed and planned to descend to earth as man that he might redeem man from ruin. Both of these ends are found in both books, but each book treats one of them with special emphasis. In both books, God and man starting, so to speak, from their opposite ends meet in Christ, the God-man.

Commendations

Biblical scholars have heaped many tributes on Romans. Martin Luther wrote: "This Epistle is of the New Testament, the purest gospel. The more time one spends on it, the more precious it becomes." Luther's English contemporary, William Tyndale, ninety per cent of whose translation of the Bible was incorporated nearly a century later into our King James Version, said: "No man verily can read it too much, or study it too well... The more it is chewed the pleasanter it is,... so great treasure of spiritual things lieth hid therein." Coleridge, poet, philosopher, theologian, regarded it "the profoundest book in existence." Codet called it "The greatest masterpiece ever conceived and realized by the human mind." David Bacon wrote: "The faith of Christendom in its best periods has been more indebted to this Epistle than to any other portion of the Living Oracles." F. W. Farrar: "It is unquestionably the clearest and fullest statement of the doctrines of sin and deliverance from it, as held by the greatest of the apostles." These encomiums are cited to show what learned, pious men have thought of Romans, and perchance thereby to whet our appetites for its study. Undoubtedly, the roots of the Protestant Reformation grew up out of the deep, rich soil of Romans and Galatians.

If gifted, godly men over the centuries have found matter and inspiration for deep, prolonged study of Romans, the book must merit, require, and reward such study. It is not a book to be only tasted, or hastily swallowed: it is a book to be "chewed and digested." It cannot be read as mere pastime; it is not designed to be a substitute for a game of canasta, or an after-dinner cigar. Romans is meant for serious, eager, earnest students of the deepest and the highest things in life—things "that do often lie too deep for tears."

Methods

About fifty-five years ago, I was a member of a small class in the old Nashville Bible School, studying Romans under James A. Harding. As our final examination, we were seated in a row on the stage of the little chapel one night to repeat from memory, each student a verse at a time, round and round the class (In such manner classes recited the multiplication table in those days as some of my readers recall, "If they be willing to testify"), the entire book before a room full of listeners. I memorized the words of Romans in that class, but most of what I know of its teachings has been learned since. At the same time, I had a class, which required no memory work, under David Lipscomb. While in these classes, I thought a combination of the two methods would be an improvement on either method. A little later when I began to teach Bible myself, I used Harding's way for a few years more than Lipscomb's. Gradually, however, as my grasp of the principles of the Bible as a whole grew clearer and firmer, I swung toward Lipscomb's method, and probably went too far before my retirement. For nearly thirty years, some periods rather intensely, I have been studying Romans that I might teach and practice its great doctrines more effectively. I now have a class studying the book each Sunday morning in the College Church. In this series of essays just beginning in the Firm Foundation, I hope to use what I have gleaned from commentaries and all other sources. Since I have class notes, accumulated over the years, some of which do not always adequately indicate quoted material, I shall sometimes be unable to give credit where it is due. I am profoundly grateful for all the helps to which I have had access, however, and when possible and helpful shall be happy to give credit for quotations.

General Survey of Romans Theme: Christian Philosophy

Philosophy of Christian Birth. Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21

Condemnation and Justification

Philosophy of Christian Maturity. Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39

Sanctification and Glorification

Philosophy of Christian History. Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36

God created Christianity, past, present, and future, according to his sovereign will and grace, for man's salvation and his own glory.

Philosophy of Christian Behavior. Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-33, Romans 16:1-27

Relationship of Christians to the church, to the world, to the state, and to fellow Christians.

Although this skeletal outline is very inadequate, it gives an airplane view of the entire book, which will be a good guide in our study, and help keep truth in perspective. God grant that our walk with each other, and with him, through this grand "Cathedral of Christian Truth" may prove to be electrifying and sublimating to us all for time and for eternity.

Questions

What is the general theme of the Bible as a whole?

State the difference in method between Romans and Ephesians of handling this theme.

Suggest a reason for placing Romans, in order of arrangement, the first of New Testament Epistles.

What does the fact that many a learned and pious man has spent many years eagerly studying Romans imply?

What end does a skeletal outline of a book serve a student of the book?

What four subjects, according to our outline, does Romans develop?

If you had an opportunity to choose between possessing a "good memory" or a cogent reasoning faculty, which would you choose?

04.02. LESSON 2

LESSON 2

Paul's salutation to the church in Rome, one long sentence of seven verses, is his longest and richest salutation. It sweeps a vast horizon and contains much fundamental Christian truth. First, Paul himself is Christ's love-slave and apostle, "Separated unto the gospel of God," which fulfills all scriptural Messianic prophecy. Christ's created human life is of David's lineage; of his uncreated divine life it is witnessed: "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Some think that "the spirit of holiness" refers to the Holy Spirit, but it seems that Paul is thinking of Christ's dual nature—his humanity and his deity. Christ is neither Deity diluted to humanity, nor humanity exalted to Deity. His superhuman power over death, particularly his own unique resurrection declares him "to be the Son of God with power." The salutatory sentence closes with Paul's usual, "Grace to you and peace from our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace the root and peace the fruit of Christianity. This is Paul's salutation in eleven of his epistles. His two letters to Timothy add "mercy" to make the triad, "grace, mercy, peace." Hebrews has no salutation, but it closes with Paul's uniform, "Grace be with you," an ending only by Paul and John in Revelation. In this earnest, purposeful manner, as befits a servant of Christ, Paul addresses the church in imperial Rome.

Personal Matters (Romans 1:8-16) As these verses are largely personal, to begin with, Paul fittingly, in the words, "First, I thank my God," shows that God is very individual and personal to him. Every Christian should meaningfully say, "My God." As a Roman citizen, Paul knew that the life of the Roman Empire, comparable in area to our United States, was but the pulse beat of its capital city, Rome, "The mistress of the world." After planning for years to see Rome, his plans, even as the plans of other men, so far had gone awry; still, he hoped "by the will of God" to visit them. He was too good a general and statesman not to consolidate, by building a strong, Christian citadel in Pagan Rome, what had been captured from "The prince of this world." He was pining to impart "some spiritual gift" to them, and to edify and establish them. In transparent sincerity, and with consummate tact, relative to his visit, he writes: "That I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." Thus, we see that a gifted, spiritual man, realizing that he owes everything to God's grace, can be gracious with his brethren. Is it not good that diversities among members of the church are such that no member is either so strong or so weak that he may not both edify and be edified?

Paul felt that since he was born in debt to God (Galatians 1:15), and that since he had been entrusted with the universal gospel, he was debtor to God and to all men no matter what their race, language, mental ability, culture or religion. He knew that humanity was one, and had one corrupt heart, which only the gospel could purify. Judging from what he writes, we wonder if godless pride, the rudimentary sin of angels and men, which later grew to such huge proportions in Rome, was not already so working that they felt peeved at his prolonged absence. Were they saying that he was ashamed to come to Rome with the cross, "the emblem of suffering and

shame" and weakness? In any event, in harmony with the universality of the gospel, Paul, a Jew, writes in Greek to Romans: "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Instead of being ashamed of the gospel, Paul "despising shame" as had done his Master, gloried in it. He had seen and felt its power; it could snatch others, as it had snatched him, from eternal night. It was nothing to be ashamed of, or distrusted, anywhere; it could do something for Rome which her wealth, culture, and world-wide law and power had not done, and could never do. Paul always lived as he later wrote: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8). No. Christians are neither ashamed of, nor a shame to, the gospel. In this manner, Paul portrays himself to be a thankful, prayerful, purposeful, honorable (feels his debt), energetic, humble, brave man.

"A Righteousness of God"

Romans is an exposition of, "It (the gospel) is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth... For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith." A study of only three key terms is now possible.

First, the gospel salvation is good news from abroad. That is, it is not founded on man's doing; it is God's achievement and revelation, not man's invention and attainment. It is not primarily good advice, of which the world is full; or lessons to be learned from Christ's life; far more and far deeper than these, it is life through his death. It is certainly not bad news to be feared and spurned, but unspeakably good news that just anybody, even "a nobody," can hear.

Second, righteousness. The Greek word translated "righteousness" may mean either righteousness or justification. The several times the phrase, "Righteousness of God," appears in Romans, the context plainly requires the meaning: God's way of making sinners righteousness—that is, God's justifying righteousness, or practical justification. "God's righteousness," meaning an attribute of God's personal character, is found twice in Romans 3:1-31. The correct interpretation of "A righteousness of God," as found in this verse, is, I think, God's personal righteousness in action, resulting in the justification of sinners.

Third, believeth. God, who "abideth faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13), provides righteousness and promises to make it over to men on condition, not of law and self-righteousness as they expect, but on the condition of faith. "Righteousness which is of the law" and "Righteousness which is from God by faith" are thrown into sharpest contrast in Php 3:9. It must never be forgot, however, that "faith apart from works (of obedience) is dead" (James 2:26), as the phrase "obedience of faith," found twice in Romans makes plain. The expression, "from faith unto faith," a moot Scripture, means, I think, that the faithful God so designed and created the gospel that on the human side, it must begin in the principle of self-emptying faith rather than in human wisdom and worth; so made it that it can be revealed only "unto faith"—that is, only to men who have faith; or only "to every one that believeth." Instead of the Old Testament opposing this, it supports the doctrine it is evident from, "The righteous shall live (be made to live) by faith," not works (Habakkuk 2:4).

Questions

According to Romans 1:1-32, is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament one of conflict or continuity?

Comment upon Christ's dual nature.

Why did Paul so much wish to visit Rome?

Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel?

Why is Christian salvation such universal good news?

Comment upon the meaning of the phrase, "A righteousness of God," as it is used in Romans.

What is the difference between a righteousness which is of the law and a righteousness which is of faith?

04.03. LESSON 3

LESSON 3

Paul's readiness to go to Rome is in marked contrast with Moses' unreadiness to go to Egypt. Moses, even after his "heavenly vision" at the bush and other miracles, reluctant to undertake freeing the Hebrews from bondage, so multiplied excuses that God became angry with him: whereas Paul, "obedient unto the heavenly vision," which he saw near Damascus, asked at once, "What shall I do, Lord?" After Moses had timidly taken up the task, and after his first attempt had but increased the miseries of the slaves, how he complained against God! with his wail: "Lord, why hast thou sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath dealt ill with this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Exodus 5:22-23). How does this compare with Paul's, "I am ready?" or with his, "But thanks be to God, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ?" As natural men, both Paul and Moses were very superior. The chief difference between them was in their religion—the difference between the law and the gospel. Paul was "in Christ." Inasmuch as Romans makes much of this difference further on, study of the matter is deferred until later.

"The Wrath of God"

Centuries after God had said he could "by no means clear the guilty (impenitent sinners)" (Exodus 34:7), he reaffirms his unchanging nature in the statement, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18). Ungodliness and unrighteousness are terrible opposites of the two tables of the Decalogue, and of Christ's double commandment (Love for God and love for man) upon which "The whole law hangeth and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

God's wrath is no mere sentimental passion; it is his eternal, legal, judicial decree against lawlessness. It is as inherent in and as essential to his nature as is love; indeed, love and wrath are the poles of God's holiness. Of Christ, it is written: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9). God abhors sin worse than a very temperamental musician abhors discord. God's love does not violate equity; the hand that offers forgiveness must dispense justice as well. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne" (Psalms 89:14). Without stern aspects, nothing loftier than facile good nature and guilty indifference to sin is possible. In maintaining moral order in the universe, God's wrath is inevitable and inexorable. God's wrath is God's love smitten with a dreadful sorrow—his love in agony. A mother loves a good son in joy; she loves a bad son with a love that hurts. So God. He is the God of both Esau and Jacob. Goethe said that were he God, sin would break his heart. Should God clear the guilty, would not he himself break the deepest moral law? The divine love and law at the heart of the universe are stern, splendid things—deep and tragic. God is good, but he is not goody-goody. He has irrevocably decreed that "The wages of sin is death," and as long as he reigns willful sinners must pay and pay both before and after death. Were it otherwise, God would be a God, not to love and trust, but to fear and dread. May it not be said that the wrath of God is his righteousness apart from Christ?

Responsibility of the Heathen In unfolding the philosophy of Christianity, Paul begins by showing that all men, Gentile and Jew alike, are "by nature, children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), under condemnation, "fitted unto destruction." This makes sense, for unless men are universally condemned, to provide universal salvation would be as useless as to build a great bridge where there were no river to cross.

Romans 1:18-32 concerns the responsibility, guilt and punishment of heathen Gentiles. Paul argues that visible things in nature since the creation of the world are proof of God's invisible attributes, "even his everlasting power and divinity." Instead of this Scripture teaching that the divine unity, almighty power, and infinite goodness and faithfulness of the Creator as seen in nature are sufficient and final for all of man's religious needs, it teaches that man, created in the likeness of God, has lying at a deeper level than his susceptibility to nature, a spiritual nature and conscience, fitted to hear God's moral voice as is his ear to hear sound, and that, therefore, he should be thankful for, but not satisfied with, nature; and consequently follow on, ever seeking more of God's invisible traits. If men, being what they are and seeing what they see, so constituted and so circumstanced, do not glorify and thank God, it is because they "hinder the truth in unrighteousness" and insincerity. Truth that is not lived out honestly in the life cannot continue to live in the mind.

Man's moral nature is the basis of all religion. His capacity for discerning God, more than any other human gift, distinguishes him from the animals. In fact, this is the only absolutely differentiating faculty, for animals, though they are not qualified for religious experience, do in a measure feel, remember, and think. Without this human endowment, men could never receive either law or gospel from God. But they are born immutably religious. The most benighted peoples of today have a concept of a supreme deity, and of immortality; they have moral standards, which none of them profess to attain. Hence, their altars, priests, and sin offerings. Whether Paul preached to barbarians at Lystra (Acts 14:1-28), or to Greek philosophers at Athens (Acts 17:1-34), he preached primarily to their conscience, for it is God's point of personal contact with his human creatures.

Men who refuse to acknowledge their knowledge of God, close the two eyes (worship and praise) for seeing and knowing God better, and turn their back on light to walk in their own shadow are "without excuse" for their ignorance and sin. Of course, inasmuch as fidelity to opportunity is the measure of responsibility, if they had never had any knowledge of God, their status would be different. But, if rejecting even what is revealed of God in creation and conscience does not make men inexcusably guilty, Romans 1:1-32 has no meaning. Verily, sin is not a chance, but a choice. Moreover, that God from the very first supplemented this rudimental testimony with personal instruction and communion emphasizes God's fidelity and man's infidelity. For one to remember that Lamech, Noah's father, was born before Adam died makes him wonder if the flood might not have been averted by oral teaching and tradition. Nature reasons well in her domain, but in the higher domain of personal, maturing religion, she must be content to be only handmaid.

Questions

Account for the fact that Paul was a much more confident, ready man than was Moses.

Account for the fact that man is the only animal that has direct, moral responsibility before God.

May men without the Bible learn enough about God from nature and their conscience, if they do not glorify and praise him, to condemn them?

According to Romans 1:1-32; sketch the origin and development of idolatry.

Explain how God punishes sin with sin.

How is it that God's love and God's wrath are compatible?

Are men in heathen lands today lost primarily because they do not know Christ the Savior?

04.04. LESSON 4

LESSON 4

God's justifying righteousness is revealed only in the gospel of Christ. But from the creation, his wrath "against all ungodliness and righteousness" has been revealed in various ways. Because they work against the grain of eternal truth and law, sinners always encounter the wrath of God. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). When Eve and Adam disobeyed the law of God, they were denied access to the tree of life, and consequently became subject to death. Their posterity became more and more lawless until God in righteous wrath destroyed the world of law breakers in the flood. Only a few centuries after the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah became so lawless that God consumed them with fire. All secular history agrees with Biblical history that lawlessness leads to ruin. In fact, secular history, when we climb high enough to read it correctly, is a continued story of God's wrath against sin, demonstrated over the earth in disorder, disease, decay, and death. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Moreover, man's conscience tells him that sin deserves punishment. But the climax of the revelation of God's penal wrath against sin is the cross of Christ.

"They Became Fools"

Through physical nature, human nature, and personal revelation combined, God sufficiently revealed himself to primitive men to test their attitude toward him. The test proved them to be so ungrateful, irreverent, and self-sufficient that they thought they could get along better without him. They did not discard God because of a lack of knowledge, but because their affections did not keep pace with their knowledge. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Nothing can so warp reason, darken the "senseless heart," demoralize the whole man, and defeat known truth as do depraved affections, perverted will, and corrupted life. What men love influences their lives and destinies more than does what they know. Made in the likeness of God, designed to be dependent on God, and required, "having heard the word, (to) hold it fast... in an honest and good heart," man is verily a presumptuous fool to think that apart from God he can live morally any more than he can physically. When men think that human wisdom is supreme, they have reached the pinnacle of folly.

Satan's lie to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die," but "Ye shall be as God," by convincing her that the forbidden fruit held the key to some knowledge which God had no right to withhold from her so shattered her confidence in her Maker that she spurned creatural faith, and deified herself. Her disloyalty was the very essence of sin, for "sin is lawlessness;" her relationship to God became ungodly. Men must accept the distance between Creator and creature, or else they die. In both nature and religion, they live by faith, and must allow God to know some "secret things" (Deuteronomy 29:29), which he withholds from them for their good. Since "Now we see in a mirror, darkly," and "know in part," only (1 Corinthians 13:12), we must trust God to be infallibly strong, wise, and good. From the creation until today, mankind has been allergic to all such "forbidden fruit." With Romans 1:1-32 declaring that heathen peoples are responsible, reprehensible, and

reprobate, who can declare them innocent? Of course, they are not guilty because they do not accept Christ of whom they have never heard, but because they lack moral integrity, and fail to use the knowledge they do have. They are not expected to know the Trinity, but the Godhead. Monotheism was the primeval religion, and got the start of polytheism. The Bible makes no mention of idolatry before the flood. Joshua's farewell address to the Hebrews, warning them that their ancestors worshiped idols, is its first mention. Instead of man struggling slowly up out of savagery, he from the beginning struggled against God, and consequently fell into savagery. If man has the principle of organic evolution inherent with him, and if he had evolved much by Paul's day, why have not heathen people continued to evolve since then? If man has ascended from the beasts, why are heathens today sub-bestial in some respects, especially in their nauseating abuse of sex? "What fools these mortals be" (Shakespeare's Puck).

"God Gave Them Up"

After men and women gave God up, God in retributive wrath "gave them up... that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves." The moral world is so constituted that renouncing God is self-avenging. By dishonoring God, men dishonor themselves—mind and heart (Romans 1:21) and body (Romans 1:24). According to this chapter, God punished idolatry in descending steps, avenging sin with sin. Since men by nature must worship, when they ceased to worship God, they worshipped "an image of corruptible man." Then follow abominable, elaborate systems of worshipping images "of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things" (Romans 1:23). The Apollo of Greece, the eagle of Rome, The cow of Egypt, and the serpent of Assyria are all here. The boasted wisdom of the Euphrates and the Nile, and the proud learning of Hellas and Rome are summarily dismissed with a word—"learned ignorance." In this down-ward plunge, unnatural prostitution became prevalent, all restraint of animal passions being lost, and finally moral distinctions were obliterated and all ethical codes and "natural affections" were violated (Romans 1:28-32). This snapshot of heathen life shows man helplessly wallowing in the filth of the flesh, reconciled to his own sin and encouraging gin in others, although he knows both his sin and his death sentence. Such men are already in the suburbs of hell. When God gives men up, what may they not become! None of the purity and goodness now on earth is due, primarily, to human nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6), and Romans 1 shows what the flesh is. Is it not fair to judge God by what happens to men who respectively obey or disobey him? If his friends are not blessed above his foes, is he not a fake? That Paul's picture of lust-sick, sin-sunk heathenry is still true, not a color too dark, is granted by all who know heathenry first hand. As he was in Corinth, notorious throughout the Roman Empire for its hideous social vices, when he painted it, he had not far to seek his colors. It faithfully portrays the world Christ came to save. Any religious message that does not begin with man's ruin and deep, hopeless need is not from God. Of all religions, only Christianity, because it has the specific for sin, does not minimize sin.

Questions

What does God's definition of sin, namely, "Sin is lawlessness," reveal the nature of sin to be?

Is it true that human apostasy began in the love of forbidden knowledge and continues in the love of forbidden ignorance (John 3:19)?

Does what men know, or what they love, more influence their life and destiny?

What is the summit of human folly?

Why was the Flood in Noah's generation a moral necessity?

Judging by what a religion, or a philosophy, does for men, how does pure Christianity compare with other religions and philosophies?

With this divinely painted picture of the fleshly man in Romans 1:1-32 before him, can anyone have "confidence in the flesh," and in human righteousness and goodness?

04.05. LESSON 5

LESSON 5

Atheistic historians know that after nations flourish for a time they decay and die to be supplanted by other nations. Though these historians know that the clock of civilization runs down periodically, they do not know the real cause of its so doing. Superficially and little to the point, they talk about "a natural moral balance" that must be maintained, meaning that, when the immorality and corruption of a race ends in racial extermination, a more wholesome race takes its place to restore, temporarily, "a natural moral balance." Following this cycle, authorities say that a score of civilizations have perished.

Only historians who believe the Bible can know that the appalling pagan morals described in Romans 1:1-32 and this flux of civilization are the result of God's wrath against men who "refuse to have God in their knowledge." To belie airs, faced with general biblical teaching such as, "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men" (Daniel 4:17); and such as, God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26); and faced with the particular examples of the Noahic flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and many similar things, the conclusion is inescapable that God deals personally with individuals and with nations, both for blessing and for cursing.

Inasmuch as all nations that dishonor God go the same route, the fate that has always overtaken godless nations must befall modern nations (nay, is already befalling them), for they are drifting away from God and his word. Many of the shocking, abhorrent sins of the flesh, which Paul says are an outpouring of God's holy wrath upon those who reject him, are not strangers in America today, even in some of her churches and institutions of so-called higher learning. And of course the defaulting nation with the most light is the most culpable.

Humanity on Probation

If Psalms 115:16, "The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; but the earth hath he given to the children of men," seems to teach that man alone is responsible for earthly history, Psalms 103:19, "Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all," expands the former truth into the fuller truth that God from heaven "ruleth in the kingdom of men." Man is God's responsible, probational steward of earth, and must account for his trust.

Within the framework of God's will, man has a certain freedom. God will not and Satan cannot invade and violate human freedom in the crucial choice of a man's entire life, namely, the master whom he will serve. Since man is under compulsion to decide between the mutually exclusive God and Satan, he is not as free as some think. With this choice, his liberty ends, for God controls the issue. That a man after choosing to put his hand into fire can, then, choose to escape injury is no more false than that he after choosing to sow to flesh can, then, choose to escape corruption. "God is not mocked" 'in either nature or religion. Only when the initial choice can be changed, can

the issue be changed. Without man's consent and cooperation, even God, during the period of probation, will not change the direction of earthly history. Man has been given the initiative of action on earth, and must answer to God for what happens. Man's fidelity as God's steward is the very quintessence of an orderly, moral world.

God's Judgment of His Steward The proud, sensorious Jews heartily approved the condemnation of the Gentiles recorded in Romans 1:1-32, but they did not realize that they themselves also stood condemned. Therefore Paul begins in Romans 2:1-29 an argument, which runs through Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20, to convince them that they are even more guilty than are the despised, abominable Gentiles. To avoid unnecessarily arousing their pride and prejudice, he gradually approaches his frontal attack upon their empty pretensions and bigotry. From this tactical approach (Romans 2:1-16), we get our fullest and profoundest knowledge concerning God's judgment of Christ-less men of all time. In it are found the four fixed principles upon which this judgment rests. The first principle is, God judges "according to truth." To Paul, this principle is self-evident; hence he makes no effort to prove it. God's estimate of men depends upon their moral fidelity, integrity, and reality, according to enlightenment, not upon their rituals and pretensions. Obviously, Paul has the Jews in mind, and is warning them against storing up wrath for themselves "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," by, instead of being led to repentance by God's goodness, hardening themselves against it. The second principle is, "God will render to every man according to his works." Another axiomatic truth. On the basis of works, men fall into only two groups, namely, well-doers and evil-doers. The former choose God and receive his reward; the latter reject God and receive his curse. To God, human works are either white or black, not different shades of gray. If Paul seems here to favor salvation by works, wait till you hear his whole argument. But mark well that the judgment unto condemnation of these verses does justly turn on human character. The third principle is, "There is no respect of persons with God." That is, God's judgment ignores incidentals of birth, such as race, caste, and culture. This is not so self-evident; therefore Paul lingers for a few verses to argue the point. He shows the Jews that, if they are safe before God merely because they possess his law, the Gentiles are equally safe, because they too by nature possess God's law. This proves too much for the Jews. Thus, Paul adroitly turns the Jews against themselves, makes them ridiculous, and hopes thereby to get an honest hearing for the remainder of his honest argument. The fourth principle is, "God shall judge the secrets of men." Christ the appointed Judge says: "There is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Luke 12:2). Recall that while Christ lived among men, he often surprised them by revealing their inmost thoughts, for "He himself knew what was in man" (John 2:25). Every hypocrite is to be exposed, every slandered innocent is to be vindicated, and every dark thought is to be dragged out into light. And this is the test each of God's stewards, ancient and modern, unless he has the Christ as Pleader, must pass with a perfect score to escape condemnation. "Think on these things," my readers.

Questions

In what sense is the human race God's steward?

Why does the clock of human civilization periodically run down?

Is a man compelled to choose between God and Satan as his master?

What limitation on a man's freedom does becoming Satan's servant impose?

Why and how does Paul shift the discussion from Gentiles to Jews at the beginning of Romans 2:1-29?

State the four universal principles upon which God judges, or tests, men regardless of race, caste, and culture.

What chance do Christ-less men have of passing this test?

04.06. LESSON 6

LESSON 6

According to Paul, the alphabet of all moral and religious truth and life lies within the human soul. How could men without natural "conscience... accusing or else excusing them" (Romans 2:15) be responsible, moral beings?

Conscience is one of man's built-in faculties. It is his innate consciousness that he should be honest with himself. Its office is to see that he does what he thinks he ought to do and refrains from what he thinks he ought not to do. It is the very core of his moral being, and, being infallible and final in its domain, it must be respected. One who is willing to disobey his conscience is willing to be a sinner whom neither law nor gospel can reach. For a man to trifle with his conscience is to sin against his very soul.

It is possible for one through lack of knowledge to do dastardly deeds in good conscience. Paul himself is the classic example of this major tragedy. Despite his persecuting the church before his conversion, he said some twenty years after that event: "I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" (Acts 23:1). Paul's conscience worked as well before as after he became a Christian, therefore needed no change at his conversion. However, not being legislative, but regulative of conduct, the conscience can neither make law nor alter truth. Does a child's conscientiously believing that thirty inches make a yard shorten the yard? Moreover, Paul's conscience could work only within the framework of what he knew. Does the conscience of a savage hurt him because he does not go to church on Sunday? When Paul learned the truth about Christ, his honest conscience made him accept Christ. To be conscientious, as noble and indispensable as it is, is not enough. Energy, piety, zeal, observing ordinances, and good-conscience all combined cannot take the place of knowledge. Though Christ forgave Paul, we gather from Paul's writings that he could scarcely forgive himself for his ignorant, "conscientious" sin.

Conscience is an exceedingly searching and rigorous test of conduct. Both its restraining and constraining power is great. No greater terrors and tortures than the fires of a guilty conscience are known to men. But "A good conscience is the sweetest meal to which men ever sit down." In common with other delicate and valuable things, conscience is easily abused and damaged. As the compass of a ship may be so deflected by metal on board as to cause the loss of the ship, so the conscience of well-meaning men may be so deflected by tradition, prejudice, indifferent ignorance, or personal preference as to wreck a soul. Here lurks a subtle, powerful, prevalent foe. Conscience cannot be burglarized from without; nor must it be bribed by inclination from within. If conscience, the core of personality, be wrong, what can be right? After searching the Bible and learning truth, "This above all: to thine own self be true."

Jewish Pride Punctured In the second paragraph of Romans 2:1-29, Paul applies the four principles of the first paragraph upon which God judges humanity to the Jews in particular. These

principles are the major premise and this second paragraph is the minor premise of the conclusion in the third chapter, namely, that every man, Gentile or Jew, is condemned by law—that is, legal justification is an illusion.

Paul had been "a Hebrew of Hebrews" himself, and knew all about Jewish arrogance and exclusiveness. He begins by granting the Jews five real advantages (Romans 2:17-18), but charges that they have perverted these advantages into racial pride and religious bigotry; and that in spite of their greater light as compared to Gentiles, they are guilty of the sins of heathenism. In three short, sharp questions, cracking like a whip, involving the classes of sin among the Gentiles according to Romans 1:1-32, namely idolatry, sensuality, and ethical wrongs, he indicts them, though they make high boasts of being "a light to them that are in darkness," of the same three sins, only in reverse order: "Dost thou steal?" and "Dost thou commit adultery?" and "Dost thou rob temples?" To praise virtue, but practice vice always leads to the death-cell of hypocrisy. Thus, Paul convicts the Jews of being mountain climbers who cannot climb. "Josephus records much Jewish history that reads like Gentile criminality." The arrowhead of the indictment is that their transgression of the law, after their glorying in its possession so haughtily, doubly dishonors and blasphemes God before the heathen. The Jews were so smug in their ritual and "form of knowledge and of the truth" (Romans 2:20) that they were impervious to spiritual truth. The fact that it is all but impossible for men who are steeped in self-esteem and clothed in respectability correctly to appraise themselves explains why Paul so roundly and uncompromisingly strips the Jews of their morals and religion, and sets them among the heathen. Having corrected their error that religion is merely intellectual by declaring that it requires ethical expression, he proceeds in the last verses of the chapter to correct their error that religion is merely ritualistic by teaching that it is essentially spiritual. To be told that circumcision was useless unless they kept the law must have amazed the Jews. That circumcision was contingent on anything was a brand-new idea to them. They were dumfounded to hear that a devout Cornelius was more pleasing to God than was the impious Caiaphas; stunned that "neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29); insulted that circumcision "a seal of righteousness," not to be effected by a rite. The Jews must realize that where ore is mined, or who owns it, is ignored at its assay. In this manner, Paul drives home to the Jews that they cannot pass the test of God who judges according to reality, without respect to persons, and turns one inside out down to his deepest secrets. He would have them see that God, since his fenced vineyard has produced no better grapes than the wild land, is removing the fence. But how could mankind have ever been convinced that no choice fruit could be produced by law, had the experiment not been made? To modernize this doctrine by substituting "baptism" or "Lord's supper" for "circumcision," surely warns us of the perpetual danger of formality supplanting spirituality, and encourages us to be spiritual in our worship and work.

Questions

What is your conscience?

Why was Paul's continuously unchanging "good conscience" from his youth inadequate?

Why is trifling with the conscience such a serious matter?

Why is legal justification for men impossible?

Give the substance of Paul's indictment of the Jews.

What was his grand purpose in thus denouncing them?

How may the church today fall into the fatal error that characterized the Judaism of Paul's day?

04.07. LESSON 7

LESSON 7

Three questions, which Paul deems of sufficient importance to justify a suspension of his argument on universal condemnation long enough to consider, are found in Romans 3:1-8. These questions grow naturally out of Paul's withering castigation of the Jews, and should be taken as Jewish protests against his teaching. However, they involve much vital, changeless truth.

First question: If Jews are equally condemned with Gentiles, what is the profit in being a Jew? This question betrays fleshliness, for the one who asks it sees profit only in what contributes to his pride and self-importance. Paul answers that the primary advantage of the Jew is that he is "entrusted with the oracles (utterances) of God." This advantage leads into countless other advantages, several of which he names in Romans 9:4-5.

Second question: Does God's fidelity depend upon man's fidelity? The immediate import of this question is: since God is bound by covenant to Abraham and Moses to bless Israel, will he not violate his covenant if he condemns Jews? Therefore, unless God be a covenant-breaker, unfaithful Jews will be blessed because they are of the covenantal people. With this same old sophistry, which John the Baptist and Christ labored to correct, the Jews try to refute the charge that they are condemned. They forget that God promises to curse unfaith just as he promises to bless faith; and that fidelity to his word requires him to fulfill both promises. Paul, jealous of God's honor, shrinks from the very thought of God's being unfaithful in the cry, "God forbid," and quotes David to the effect that he confessed himself to be a liar that God's justice in punishing him might be manifest. Hence, men in justifying, or excusing, their sins dishonor God!

Third question: If sin shows up God's righteousness, is not God unrighteous in punishing sinners? This question gives Paul a chance to teach some deep moral lessons, which our modern world needs. As he has already shown the Jews that, inasmuch as Gentiles also have law (Romans 2:15), their contention that mere possession of law is sufficient proves too much; likewise, again this proves to much; it makes the Jews themselves ridiculous, for it blots out all moral distinctions, even unto saving the heathen world. How the haughty Jews would toss their heads and fume under this boomerang! In truth, could this question be answered in the affirmative, not universal condemnation, but universal salvation would follow, for God restrains the sin that does not praise him (Psalms 76:10).

Paul's unqualified answer to the question is that sin is wholly without merit; that it is evil not only in consequences. but its nature is lawless, and evil; that it remains evil even when God overrules to bring good out of it, as in the case of Joseph and his brothers. That in "commends God's righteousness is incidental; expediency can never justify a thing that is sinful. God does not need sin in operating his universe, and when he weaves it in, he but demonstrates his sovereign righteousness, unity, wisdom, and power. To make a sin a virtue tumbles the moral world upside down into chaos. As a triumphant climax, Paul tells the Jews their reasoning is so foolish and

morally crooked that they unwittingly vindicate him. That is, if Paul's false doctrine gives them their occasion (as they say it does) to uphold God's covenantal truth, Paul is not guilty, for by their reasoning his unrighteousness is commending God's righteousness. Paul concludes his answer to the quibbles of the Jews by cleverly reminding them that their logic which would justify him if he taught it were all right to "do evil that good may come," is so utterly false and wicked that those who slander him are justly condemned.

Three lofty, abiding truths emerge from these parenthetical verses: first, by giving primacy to "the oracles of God," they help us properly to evaluate and appreciate the word of God; second, by giving permanency to the wholly admirable exhortation, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar," they magnify God's unvarying, eternal truth and trustworthiness; third, by teaching that men who say, "Let us do evil that good may come," deduce an immoral conclusion from false premises, slander godly men, and deserve condemnation, these verses declare the reality and penalty of sin, and the stability and grandeur of the moral order.

Argument for Condemnation Concluded

(Romans 3:9-20) In Romans 3:1-8, Paul answered the Jews who believed, since they were sons of Abraham, they were not condemned along with all the other nations of men. Now in these verses, he shows them that their own sacred scriptures teach the condemnation of all men, especially of the Jews because they have the advantages of possessing "the oracles of God." His first quotation from David gives God's verdict of universal sin, not on Jews only, but "upon the children of men" (Psalms 14:2-3). God's appraisal of mankind just preceding the Flood, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them," is the same when he speaks much later through David, Isaiah, and Paul. And still "That which is born of the flesh is flesh—the flesh profiteth nothing" (Jesus). With scriptures from David and Isaiah, Paul makes a mosaic of man with respect to both his nature and his practice. Men are "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), fallen, decayed, and rotten at the core. As there are no good fallen angels, just so there are no good fallen men. "None is good, save one, even God" (Jesus). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 18:9). The citadel of human personality is in the hands of the enemy. God cannot use natural men in his spiritual kingdom until they become spiritual men by a spiritual birth. Men need to repent of what they are as well as of what they do (Romans 3:10-12). With respect to practice and conduct, men are in word, corrupt, deceitful, uncharitable, and blasphemous (Romans 3:13-14); indeed, murderous, destructive, cruel, and warmongers (Romans 3:15-17). In Romans 3:19-20, Paul holds his just completed graphic picture of man's depraved nature working itself out through his bodily members up before the Jews and asks: "Do you see what your law does for you?" He tells them what law can, and cannot, do. It reveals wounds for which it has no remedy; it smites, but cannot heal. When he tells them law has neither office nor power to justify, he demolishes their last refuge, and hopes to move them to plead guilty and throw themselves upon the clemency of their beneficent Judge.

Questions

How does Paul answer the contention of the Jews that they cannot be condemned because they are children of Abraham?

Wherein does the logic that it would be inconsistent in God to punish men, who give him an occasion to show his righteousness, prove too much?

Why cannot Christians ever say, 'Let us do evil, that good may come'?

Show that Romans 3:1-8 upholds the nature and the reality of sin, and the stability and grandeur of moral law.

According to the Old Testament, what is God's general appraisal of the human race?

More specifically, what are men with respect to their nature, their words, and their deeds?

What can law do for men? What can it not do for men?

04.08. LESSON 8

LESSON 8

According to our outline of Romans, condemnation and justification compose the first section of Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21 namely, "Philosophy of Christian Birth." In this article, we are passing out of condemnation into justification. Paul has established the truth that no man is able to pass God's test of four points, and is therefore, being condemned, in need of justification. If Christianity is thought of as a great cathedral, condemnation (Romans 1:18-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-20) is clearing off the building site; justification (Romans 3:21-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21) is the deep, solid foundation the building requires; sanctification (Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25) is the body of the building; and glorification (Romans 8:1-39) is the dome. Condemnation under law is an irrefutable argument for its opposite, justification under grace.

If it has seemed at any time in Paul's discussion of condemnation that he thinks it possible for any man to escape condemnation, he is thinking of an ideal case that might have been had any man never violated his own sense of right or wrong. The violation of conscience is the crux of responsible sinning. Paul knows that, instead of pretending to be sinless, all men have their altars, priests, sin-offerings, and he can therefore write: "We before laid to the charge of both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin" (Romans 3:9); and again: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Thus closes Paul's account of universal human failure. The tale of man under law has been told. Law is a mirror to reveal men's sins unto them, and to bring out the need of justification, but it cannot forgive sins. As it is impossible to touch stars from the deepest valley or the highest mountain, likewise the mouths of the worst and the best men are closed in dumb despair before their Judge. With respect to condemnation, men cannot be divided into big and little sinners, for one breach of law condemns.

Paul, at the midst of his condemnation-justification argument, looks both backward and forward. From the ruin of the race under law, the result of God's wrath against men for flying off the beam which he flashed them, Paul turns with an almost audible sigh of relief in his, "But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested," to a better prospect. The clause just quoted is the beginning of a long sentence comprising six verses, which holds a summary of divine wisdom and goodness—"The very marrow of the gospel." The sentence involves problems, which, because they transcend and baffle the cold, metaphysical searchings of our minds, all the better enlist our heart's deep, humble trust and warm affections. Let us now try to take the massive, sublime sentence to pieces in order better to appropriate its unspeakably rich treasures.

Note that the righteousness which God gives is, though apart from law, not contrary to law, for it is "Witnessed by the law and prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus unto all them that believe." All the countless Messianic promises, types, and prophecies in the Old

Testament underlie this "righteousness of God." There can be nothing unlawful or unjust about it, for according to the eternal Gardener's purpose from eternity past, his bud is opening into its flower after its kind.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). To know the meaning of "justified," used for the first time in Romans, is necessary. It is a legal term which means that God in his sovereign right, not by a process, but by a judicial decree proclaims that in his reckoning all condemned men are acquitted immediately upon the "obedience of faith." Freely. Inasmuch as justification is out of man's reach except as a gift, God, as a gracious act, gratuitously gives it to penitent sinners. By grace. God justifies, not on the ground of human merit or legal justice, but on the ground of his own personal kindness and pure goodness. Through redemption. Redemption always carries the idea of purchase price, ransom, and restoration. Grace the source, redemption the means, and freely the manner of justification.

After saying that redemption is in Christ, Paul concludes his mighty sentence by telling much more about redemption... about its how and why (Romans 3:25-26). First the how: "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood." This means that the death of the willing Christ is the sin-offering to God for the condemned-to-death human race. God's purpose is to propitiate (win good will cooperation) men in order that the proper relationship between him and them may be restored. Only in this way can he satisfy the deep yearning of his heart to redeem mankind. "We have redemption in his blood" (Ephesians 1:7). Redemption is free to men, but not to God or Christ, "Christ gave himself (the absolute ultimate in giving) that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Titus 2:14). "The dominant color in redemption is blood."

Now, the why: "... to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God, ... that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." Before the cross, God neither punished nor forgave sins fully (Acts 17:30; Hebrews 9:15). Saints of the Old Testament times were all sinners, yet God accepted them. Probably, angels wondered why, for "God spared not angels when they sinned." Satan and his dupes were eager to slander God as a Compromiser, tolerant of sin. God's holiness and moral integrity were at stake! But the cross clears up all of this. After God goes to the extreme of the cross in his war against sin, can he be tolerant of sin? The cross proves forever that God will not trifle with moral realities. It stands between the two covenants and vindicates God's character throughout them both. The cross is a demonstration of God's righteousness, and a propitiatory sacrifice for man's unrighteousness; it satisfies God and expiates man, so they cry in unison: "Thou, O Christ, God-man, art all we need."

It is reported that Socrates said: "The gods may forgive sin, but I do not see how." To his great mind, the majesty of law and the acquittal of law-breakers were irreconcilable. This scripture is our fullest treatment of the overwhelming problem. Though we may never know all about it, we do know, by faith, that God is "Just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." This suffices.

Questions

Consider Christianity to be a cathedral, and assign each of its four great parts (Condemnation, Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification) to its proper place in the building.

Explain the statement that, though Justification is apart from law, it is not contrary to the law of Moses and the prophets.

Define Christian Justification.

Why may Romans 3:22-26 be called "The very marrow of the gospel"?

Comment upon the sentence that, because grace is the source of Justification, blood the means, and free gift the manner of bestowment, all human boasting is eliminated.

How were the saints of the Old Testament blessed by Christ's death?

How did the cross of Christ vindicate the justice and moral character of God?

04.09. LESSON 9

LESSON 9

We now leave the sublime scripture (Romans 3:21-26), which, as a key fits its lock, meets our exceeding need, with profound gratitude that God did not take the easy way out by simply and justly committing all sinners to hell forever. That would have been no problem at all. His highly complicated problem was to judge sin in such a way as to cleanse and restore the sinner. As only God could, he solved it by the glory, mystery, and power of the cross. Since justification must be on righteous grounds, Christ had to die to make it right for God to justify sinners. A cheap justification would have been unworthy of God. An analysis of the rest of the third chapter yields three things.

First: Since condemned sinners receive justification as full, free pardon, they have no ground for boasting. Could a justly condemned convict, whose pardon had been effected by the substitutionary death of an exceptionally good friend, go back to his home town bragging about his pardon? What could so exalt God and humble man as does Christianity? Should a few choice souls climb up to heaven over a ladder of meritorious works, pride in their unique achievement would make them as unfit for heavenly society as were the angels whose pride lost them heaven. Justification is not a work for men to do, but a word about a work, already done by another on the cross, to believe. Men who try to earn heaven do but waste their effort fumbling with the wrong key about the keyhole of a door that is wide open. Only "The way of the cross leads home."

Second: Paul's argument here, based on the absurdity of having two ways to justify sinners, since it implies two Gods, should have had much weight with the monotheistic Jews. Paul reasons that the one God will no more limit the blessings of Christianity to the Jews than he does the blessings of nature; reasons that it is ridiculous to think that the Maker and Father of all mankind in dispensing Christian benefits will forget the Gentiles, because for adequate reasons of his own, he did not give them a written law.

Third: To the objection that justification "apart from law" annuls the law, Paul replies somewhat brusquely and very firmly, "Nay, we establish the law." Since the law was not given as a means of justification, but for another purpose, its being useless as a means of justification does not even militate against it. How does the gospel establish the law? "Through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Since the chief function of the law is to make men conscious of their sins, work self-condemnation, and send them in despair to Christ for refuge, whenever it does these things, it justifies and establishes itself. Does not God's law still speak in thunder to sinners? Moreover, Christians in fulfilling the law through love (Romans 13:10) establish the law as being "spiritual" (Romans 7:14) and Christian. The law cannot justify, but justification issues in the fulfillment of the law. Instead of teaching that the gospel means the death of law, Paul teaches that men must die to law as a means of justification before they can become Christians (Galatians 2:19). Indeed, Christianity is God's effectual and final way of moving men to live lawful lives. Furthermore, nothing can give divine sanction to the law and uphold its authority and majesty as

the cross does. That Christ had to endure the cross to pay the penalty for man's breaking the law, certainly establishes the law as being inviolable, "holy, righteous, and good" (Romans 7:12). Does seeding a field cancel an earlier plowing? The New Testament Witness by the Old Testament

We have just considered some general suggestions as to how the gospel establishes the law. We are now ready to see how Paul continues the subject with express documentary evidence from the Old Testament. He illustrates his former statement that Christianity is "witnessed by the law and the prophets" with respective incidents from the lives of Abraham, the father, and David, the greatest king, of the Hebrew people. In effect Paul is saying: "If you Jews would study your Bible more honestly and deeply, you could see the unity and agreement that exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

While Abraham was yet childless, God told him that his seed should be as numberless as the stars. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). That is, Abraham's faith so pleased God that God, as a favor, counted his faith unto him for justification. Paul universalizes that principle by saying: "... to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works" (Romans 4:5-6). After repenting of his base crimes, David's conscience ceased to smite, and he joyously stated this truth negatively: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered (atoned for). Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon (count) sin" (Romans 4:7-8). Blessed indeed! What can "the ungodly" under law apart from grace ever do with their past?

Jews, thus forced to admit by their own scriptures that Abraham was justified by faith apart from works, would counter: "Yes, but he was circumcised." Paul's simple, double-pointed answer that Abraham lived centuries before the law was given (Galatians 3:17), and that his circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had" (Romans 4:11) years before he was so circumcised, so cleverly and so completely demolishes the position of the Jews that they become ridiculous; to get their argument, they have to invert the plain facts of history.

Paul's shattering answer shows that Abraham was justified before there were any Jews "That he might be the father (pattern man) of all them that believe," both Jews and Gentiles. The pride of the Jews should be lowered, therefore, and the Gentiles need not despair; either can be justified by faith, but neither without it. Thus the whole Mosaic covenant of works becomes a parenthesis within the Abrahamic covenant of promise which continues in Christ. The reasoning of the Jews is turned upside down, for instead of Gentiles being justified by Jewish law, Jews, if they are to be "Abraham's seed" and have "The righteousness which is from God by faith in Christ" (Php 3:1-9), must be justified apart from the law of Moses and circumcision as was Abraham. That partisans can be so foolish and dishonest is truly amazing!

Questions

Why did Christ have to die in order to make it right for God to justify sinners?

Explain how it is that Christianity is so perfectly adapted to humble and reconcile condemned men.

State the argument based on "God is one" which Paul makes to vindicate the salvation of the Gentiles.

Though law cannot justify, how is it that justification by grace issues in the fulfillment of law?

How does Paul use the religious history of Abraham to prove that he was justified apart from law and circumcision?

Explain the statement that the Mosaic covenant of works was a parenthesis within the Abrahamic covenant of promise, which continues in Christ.

What warning should we get today from the partisan Jews with whom Paul had to deal?

04.10. LESSON 10

LESSON 10

After declaring in Romans 3:25 ("The Acropolis of the Christian Faith") that faith is the condition upon which Christ's atoning blood is appropriated, Paul devotes the next chapter to an exposition of the nature of faith. This fourth chapter nobly proves from the life of Abraham, the grand, fundamental doctrine of the entire Bible, namely, that "the ungodly" are justified "by grace... through faith." It tells much about the faith of this remarkable man, who is the prototype of all believers since his day about 2000 B.C. The fact that his religious experience in considerable detail, the first such experience so recorded, is concluded before the middle of Genesis is reached emphasizes the truth that the elements of religion—God's grace and man's faith—remain unchanged throughout the Bible. This story in Genesis opens its mouth to proclaim once for all the manner in which a sinner becomes "the friend of God."

Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21 deals especially with the Gentiles. Although the truth involved in Romans 2:1-32, Romans 3:1-21, Romans 4:1-16 is universal, Paul is trying to show especially the Jews that their Sinaitic covenant was a divinely-necessary stage in the development of the older, larger, everlasting covenant of promise made to Abraham; and that their covenant of law, as God marched royally onward through the centuries, burying generation after generation of workmen, in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham, "In thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16); "Shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3), served its purpose and contributed its part to God's ever-unfolding design until, according to his timetables, Christianity supplanted it. Surely the Jews, who have "in the law (only) the form of knowledge and of the truth," can be shown the folly of sitting longer by their burnt out crater. Paul's meager success with them, however, warns all men of all races to tread softly and fear lest they too get but a shallow, partial, distorted view of God's deep, vast, eternal whole.

"Heir of the World" In our latest "study" we found that Abraham was pronounced righteous on the ground of faith apart from works and rites (Romans 4:12). Now, we come to another great blessing which he obtained in like manner: "For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13). Approximately two thousand years after God made this promise to Abraham, Christ repeated it to his disciples: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Paul's argument for the next few verses consists of several points. Abraham could not inherit the world through law because the law in affording a better "knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20) deepens sin into transgression with its accompanying wrath and condemnation; hence, inheritance, as well as justification, is out of the reach of law—law does not invest with heirship. Again, if the inheritance be through law, "faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect." What is of desert cannot be of gift. Moreover, the promise is "of faith that it may be according to grace." Faith and grace are counterparts. Finally, the promise is "according to grace;

to the end that it may be sure to all the seed," both Jews and Gentiles. "The gifts of God... are not repented of." This reasoning makes it crystal clear for all time that faith and grace are mutually dependent and work together to a common end. Was Naaman's healing any the less by grace because his faith led him to the Jordan? And the argument is equally clear that faith and grace nullify law and works. Paul's grand, twofold conclusion thus far in Romans 4:1-25, therefore, is that Abraham, the pattern man of faith, was both justified and made heir of the world by faith apart from law.

Note that Paul teaches the heirship, because it is rooted in God's promise instead of man's merit, is sure. If it depended primarily upon man, how insecure it would be! He grows very emphatic about this surety in a parallel scripture: "God, being minded to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18). The God of Resurrection The rest of Romans 4:1-25 continues the exposition of the nature of faith by a further use of Abraham's history. To Abraham, old and dead in parental faculty, God promised a son by aged Sarah, barren from maidenhood. With second causes against this preposterous promise, Abraham after some misgiving, finally, ceasing to hang in suspense, "waxed strong through faith." Then, years after the promise was made, Isaac, the promised child, was born. Abraham was not a thoughtless man; he weighed all the difficulties, yet believed "giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Here is a simple and sublime description of both faith and omnipotence. But a harder test was to come. Years later, when it seemed that Isaac might naturally become the blessing to many, this fleshly hope was rudely shattered by God's requiring him as a burnt-offering. This created greater perplexities than ever. Besides being against every sentiment of a father's soul, the command made God self-contradictory: were Isaac offered, how could he become the blessing! All faith could do was to obey, "Accounting that God was able to raise up even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19). By using his experience as a springboard, Abraham was able to see that the God who could give Isaac could perpetuate him, and dared leap by faith the hitherto uncrossed chasm to the Resurrection. Ever living at the growing edge of real, live faith, he ever found God, too, alive and real. Thus, Abraham lived his way progressively into new truth, and went on continuously with God, out and up. Pray what is faith but the mixing in human life of God's faithfulness and man's fidelity? When does faith cease to grow and produce fruit?

Abraham's life is a supreme example of faith as a personal trust in the personal God. Paul wrote this passage "for our sake also" that we might know the simplicity, difficulty, opportunity, and blessedness of faith. To Abraham God was greater than nature. Will not such faith help us in our problems concerning prayer, God's special providence, and the resurrection? The great truth in all such matters is that a personal God and Father lives, loves and works beyond and above nature, self, and all other second causes. May not our faith in nature and self sometimes be only so much disbelief in God himself?

Questions

Has God changed his way, essentially, in justifying men since the days of Abraham?

Name a great promise, in addition to his justification by faith, which God made to Abraham.

Why cannot law invest with heirship?

Why cannot a blessing be received by both law and gift?

Name two events connected with Isaac that progressively tested and developed Abraham's faith in God himself.

How was Abraham led to believe that God could even raise the dead, a truth which lies at the very root of Christianity?

Does a personal God and Father live, love, and work beyond and above nature, men, and all other second causes?

04.11. LESSON 11

LESSON 11

Inasmuch as Abraham does not appear again in Romans, let us take another look at him to encourage the modeling of our lives after him instead of after Aristotle or Caesar. We are loath to part with an extraordinary man, who, the better he is known, grows in solitary grandeur. When he was about 75 years of age, his faith in God's call tore him from settled life in Ur of Chaldees to become a stranger and pilgrim in Canaan, where the Hittites called him "a prince of God" (Genesis 23:6). For 100 years he pitched his tent and built his altar in various places, refusing riches from the king of Sodom (Genesis 14:21-24) and even a grave for Sarah from Ephron (Genesis 23:3-16) as gifts lest he dishonor God by distrusting his promise to give him the whole land in his own time and manner. He never betrayed the sign (circumcision) of his separation unto God, nor ever centered his mind on self in anything, any more than he did in the matter of Isaac's birth. The fidelity of such men as Melchizedek (Genesis 14:1-24), Abraham, and Jethro (Exodus 18:1-27), living in the midst of heathenism, teaches us that heathen peoples are not guiltless. They could do better. The truth that the power which was able to give Isaac an existence was also able to raise "Jesus from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification," closes Romans 4:1-25. The death and the resurrection of Jesus are the two hinges upon which the door of salvation turns. The two prime articles of the gospel— man's sin that slew Jesus and God's power that raised him —focus in the cross and the empty tomb. Christ pays the full debt at the crucifixion, and God, fully satisfied, receipts in full at the resurrection. The blood removes the penalty of sin, and the resurrection opens up the power of the risen Christ for the enabling of his people. Moreover Christ's resurrection, since he has "been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep," is the certificate of the resurrection of all who sleep in him. A paragraph about the way Paul and James use Abraham. As we have seen, Paul uses him to show that "the ungodly are justified, apart from religious works and rites, by faith in the propitiatory blood of Christ." Characteristic of Paul, he digs down to the deepest roots of Christianity to show that it is grounded 'in Christ, and that meritorious works apart from faith in Christ are dead and powerless to justify sinners. James does not have this matter in mind at all. His chief purpose is to show especially Jewish Christians, who have brought Jewish legalism, ritualism, and traditionalism over into the church, that faith in Christ is dead and powerless to justify Christians unless it is perfected in Christian work. Paul and James are writing about the opposite ends of Christianity, and use the words, "justify" and "faith" and "work" in different senses. In his argument Paul sets Christian faith over against all other faiths and works, whereas James contrasts dead and live Christian faith. Paul teaches that works apart from faith in Christ are dead, and James adds, with Paul's full approval, that even Christian "faith apart from (Christian) works is dead." James expects Christians who begin in Paul's faith to continue and finish in his works.

Christian Assurance

Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25 establish the truth that, though all men are hopelessly condemned by law, they may be justified by grace through faith. If some legalist fears that Christianity may not endure and succeed because it asks so little of men themselves, and is too easy to challenge men of mettle, in a passage (Romans 5:1-11) that revolves around peace and hope, Paul drowns all his fears in a veritable flood of joy and assurance. There is scarcely another Scripture so brimful of the infinite resources of Christianity to make men strong, courageous, steadfast, fruitful, joyous, and invulnerable. This passage pertains to Christians of course, and with respect to time covers past, present, and future. The past (a look backward): Christians are justified. Their initial justification is always past, never to be repeated. It settles the sin and condemnation question forever. Hostilities are over; the peace treaty is signed. Christians do not come into judgment with Christ-less men (John 5:24), but answer to God for only their lives and labors (1 Corinthians 3:8; Revelation 22:12). The present (a look around): Christians stand squarely on the ground of grace, reconciled to God, crying "Abba, Father," being indwelt by the Holy Spirit who sheds the love of God abroad 'in their hearts. The future (a look forward): "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." This is anticipating the risen, glorified bodies in which we shall enjoy "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away... ready to be revealed in the last time." To be taught reliably that peace with God gives both hope of future glory and ability to "Rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame" is solid ground for assurance. Then, when we go into the furnace and come through the fire more steadfast, confident, and hopeful, the experience increases our assurance and courage. To learn experimentally that Christianity is actually so marvelously adapted to our deepest spiritual needs that somehow when the chastening hand of our Father lies heavy upon us we, though bruised and broken, creep, trusting and hoping, a little nearer to his side all the while is the sunlit summit of assurance, approvedness, and hope. Tribulation may be a bitter, but not a barren, tree; it produces; behold its fruit! As human love at its highest, rarely someone may be ready to die for a strong, good man. In strongest contrast, God commended his love to the world by giving his beloved Son to die for weak men who were all ungodly sinners, and enemies. The love that lays a foundation like that may be trusted to the very end with uttermost assurance. The passage begins and ends with the phrase, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." It is no more true that Christ died to "redeem us from all iniquity" than it is true that in his risen, glorified body, he ever lives to plead for us at heaven's court. Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, he at the same time lives "Bound in the bundle of life" with us, the life and light of our lives. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

Questions

What light do the lives of such men as Melchizedek, Abraham, and Jethro throw upon heathen life?

Explain Paul's statement that Christ "was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."

Show that Paul and James teach the same gospel.

Verify the statement that Romans 5:1-11 revolves around peace and hope, and show the significance of the fact that the passage begins and ends with "Our Lord Jesus Christ."

What does this Scripture teach about the love of God and the work of the Holy Spirit?

Apply this doctrine of Christian assurance to past, present, and future.

What does the statement that "Tribulation may be a bitter, but not a barren, tree" mean?

04.12. LESSON 12

LESSON 12 The book of Romans is our deepest and fullest exposition of the philosophy (working principles) of Christianity. Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25 show man's need of redemption and give God's provision for this need—human redemption and divine justification. These chapters leave us looking backward to the cross of Christ with humble thanksgiving and praise, and forward to his throne above, where he is our priest, advocate, and very life, with assurance and hope.

Adam

"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; so that death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans 5:12). Since this verse states that sin and its offspring, death, entered the human race, without going into detail about how they entered, speculations concerning the how, which add nothing to Paul's history of religion, have always been rife.

However, taking this categorical statement "that all sinned" in its context, plus relevant Scripture, it seems to me an inescapable conclusion that Adam, as federal head and representative of mankind, which is an organic whole, when he revolted against God's authority in Eden, passed the deadly virus of sin on to his posterity, and took it down with him in ruin. "All sinned," therefore, representatively in Adam, and along with him lost the source of life. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27); "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). An example of the working of the solidarity of humanity is seen in Levi's paying tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham, his great-grandfather, even though Levi "was in the loins of his father" (Hebrews 7:9-10) at the time. Does not David bear witness to this truth when he writes: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalms 51:5)? And Paul when he says that Jews and Gentiles alike "were by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3)? Whatever change Adam's nature sustained in his fall was transmitted to Seth, whom he "Begot in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:3). Men are shackled with a chain, too strong for them to break in their own strength, reaching back to Adam.

Paul knowing that it is hard for men to accept their state of entailed, racial sin pauses to explain before going on with his main argument. He first explains that the universal cause of the universal death between Adam and Moses, since there was during that time no law that imposed the death penalty, was Adam's sin. If Adam had never committed another sin after his first transgression, his posterity, on the organic principle that a diseased tree can bear only impaired fruit, would have shared his mortality with its attendant ills and subsequent death. What other solution of the deep, sad problem of suffering child-hood and of imbeciles? What thoughtful, pious man can wish, until men, especially infants, cease dying, to do away with race sin? Its elimination could but make more and greater problems. This entailment applies to Adam's race with its corrupted nature, not to men's individual sins. There is no intimation in the Bible that men die a second death, a spiritual death, for Adam's sin. It is appointed that men die only once for his sin. It is not for Adam's sin, but

for their own personal sins that men are lost eternally in hell. "Every man is the Adam to his own soul." If only Adam's sin is to be judged, universal, eternal salvation is true.

If we shrink from this doctrine, probably it is because we do not understand the real nature of sin, and its power to pollute. The facts of life proclaim the same solemn, stern truth. I have read of a physician who gave up his Christian profession because he could not see how a just God could allow so much suffering in the world. He went on in his unbelief for a time, but in his practice he came to know so certainly that the iniquities of fathers are visited upon their children that he gave up skepticism. What he had rejected in the Bible pursued him so relentlessly in life that he for the sake of consistency went back to his early faith. What sort of a world would it be without suffering any way? For one thing, it would have no Christ or mothers. Perhaps suffering is not as bad as we may sometimes think. "There is a cross at the heart of the universe." Can we not trust "our Father" beyond our own creatural faculties?

"Jesus Christ Our Lord"

"For 'if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:17). A comparison of Adam, "a figure" of Christ, and of Christ, "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), in their resemblances and disparities, is found in Romans 5:12-21. Both are representative men whose acts—Adam's disobedience and Christ's "obedience even unto death"—are imputed, respectively, unto those whom they represent. Adam is a fountain of evil; Christ of good. Sin, condemnation, ruin and death follow in Adam's train; justification, righteousness, redemption, and life in Christ's.

Respecting disparity, Christ does not merely take Adam's defaulted place in order to restore the status quo. As a statue always surpasses its model, five times over the chapter declares that benefits in Christ "much more" than compensate for losses in Adam. The poison of Adam has a "much more" potent antidote in Christ; the stream of grace runs stronger and deeper than the stream of sin. Indeed, the supreme doctrine of the passage is that good in Christ "much more" than counterworks evil in Adam; that God is "much more" ready to impute eternal life in Christ than temporary death in Adam. (The principle of imputation as it applies in both Adam and Christ, however, is repudiated by self-sufficient and impenitent men). Without choice, all men die in Adam; without choice, all men are restored to life at the resurrection. This balances the scales. The "much more," that is, to "Reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" is a matter of free will and personal choice. Do men, even Christian men, appreciate this amazing superabundance of grace that grants them this unutterable favor of choosing this incomparable gift?

Romans 5:12-21 lays bare human history at its root. This sketch of the religious history of the race is the key to some of the mysteries of divine government. Should we not thankfully and faithfully use it lest we fail to know our-selves and consequently miss some of the essential secrets of life? Without this key the next three chapters do not give up their sweetness and strength.

Questions

In what state of mind should students of Romans be when they have reached the end of Romans 4:1-25?

In what sense do all men sin in Adam?

Do secular history and life support the doctrine of hereditary sin?

Can you explain why the collision of love and sin results in a cross?

What does "Every man is the Adam of his own soul" mean? n.

What does "The poison of Adam has a much more potent antidote in Christ" mean?

Why is Romans 5:12-21 of supreme importance to students of history and of religion?

04.13. LESSON 13

LESSON 13 With the dark, bloody reign of sin through Adam in contrast with the reign of grace through Christ, Romans 5:1-21 closes. "The law came in besides that the trespass might abound" (Romans 5:20). Adam, Moses, and Christ correspond to the three respective stages in man's religious history. Adam, promise made (Genesis 3:15; Moses, law given; Christ, promise realized). Because men between Adam and Moses had no written law by which to judge conduct, they did not know how lawless and immoral they were. The law came in to convince men that, inasmuch as they were unable to live up to its requirements, the utmost possibility under the law was the reign of sin in death until the promised seed of the woman came. This proves that the law of Moses was an essential factor in the development of Christianity.

Justification and Sanctification With Romans 6:1-23, Romans passes out of justification (a divine work for us), pertaining to becoming a Christian, into sanctification (divine work in us), pertaining to living the Christian life. "Justification makes saints, and sanctification makes saints saintly." God first justifies, that is, cancels the guilt and penalty of past sins; then, the justified progressively grow in purity and sanctity throughout present life; and finally the sanctified mount to glory for future eternity. Romans 6:4, Justification, sanctification, and glorification are not disconnected states; rather they lie, respectively, one above another, blended into one grand whole. Paul has just laid the deep, solid foundation (justification) of human redemption, and now, for three wonderful chapters, he builds thereon the magnificent superstructure (sanctification and glorification). The doctrine "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Romans 5:20) may be perverted into let us "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Romans 6:1). But instead of grace granting license to sin, it establishes law by providing for its fulfillment. "Grace is opposed to sin and devours it" (Luther). Sin belongs to sinners, not saints. For Christians to treat God worse than they would human friends, by thus distorting the gospel and thereby taking advantage of his goodness; to think so ignorantly and unworthily of him; and to act so utterly contrary to the spirit of grace moves Paul to the resolute outburst "God forbid."

Twofold Identity with Christ That Christians are dead to sin is Paul's first reason why it is morally impossible for them to continue to sin. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death" (Romans 6:2-4). Paul is saying to the Romans in effect: "Our baptism pictorially sets forth the doctrine of the gospel; if we are not baptized into Christ's death, that is count his death to be our death, our baptism is meaningless—a mere mockery. Just as it is physically impossible for a friend who died and was buried years ago still to walk about among us, just so it is morally impossible for our old man who was crucified with Christ to be still alive and dominate our personality as he did before his crucifixion." A Christian's death throughout this passage (Romans 6:1-11) is a single past event, for he died representatively with Christ when mankind's death penalty was executed on him at the cross. God reckoned us all, as we must reckon ourselves, on the cross with his Son. Paul says of himself what every Christian must say: "I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). After sin had once caused Christ's

death, he was forever beyond its claim, dominion, and doom. Christians are identified with him in death and share his grave with him; their death must be as certain and final as was his. They are no more certainly "baptized... unto (eis) the remission of sins" than they are "baptized into (eis) his death." The supreme weakness and tragedy of the church has ever been, even until now, the unwillingness of Christians to be identified with their Lord in death. All Christians today, in the Christian sense, died nearly 2000 years ago. When temptation assails us, we should say: "No, we cannot hear and feel your appeal and power, for we have been dead ever since we became Christians."

"For the death that he died, he died unto sin once (for all time): but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin (once for all), but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." Christian conversion involves a catastrophic upheaval in a man's life. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Do not forget what conversion did to Paul! It is such a revolutionary change that Christ describes it as being "born anew." It is similar to rising from the dead: "If we have become united with him 'in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing that our old man was crucified with him." God's wisdom 'is seen in the perfect dramatization in baptism of one man's dying and being buried, and of another man's being born. Wonderfully, baptism proclaims our twofold identity with Christ.

"Our Old Man" Who is "Our Old Man?" Romans seems to teach that he is our heritage from Adam—not the guilt, but the consequences of Adam's sin. Do not the neglected children of a drunkard suffering hunger as a consequence of their father's drinking illustrate in part, at least, this truth? And may not the children get as another consequence a warped nature that makes them susceptible to intoxicants? It seems to me that the Bible, behavior of small children, and all history teach that children are born with a sin-bent nature, somewhat as a carnivorous animal is carnivorous by nature before it eats flesh. Who but Adam could have remained sinless? It is not a theory, but an indisputable fact, no man has lived a sinless life. Does not this call for fundamental, universal cause?

Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, and Romans 8:1-39 are rooted in the last paragraph of Romans 5:1-21, where condemnation is traced back to the first Adam, and justification to Christ, the last Adam. As the word "sin" is used several times in these chapters, it cannot refer to deeds of wrongdoing, but must refer, I think, to the sin-biased nature of Adam's race. "Our old man," linked with Adam, must be crucified together with Christ, that a new man may be "raised together with Christ," in whom mankind gets a new start. This is the pivot upon which man's redemption turns.

Questions

What service does Moses render as a necessary stepping stone from Adam to Christ?

How are Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification related to each other religiously?

What perversion of Christian doctrine was responsible for Paul's vehement "God forbid"?

In what sense is Christ's death a Christian's death?

Is an old man's being dead to youthful follies a good illustration of a Christian's being dead to sin?

Explain how baptism proclaims a Christian's twofold identity with Christ.

Who is "our old man"?

04.14. LESSON 14

LESSON 14

We learn from Romans 3:8 that some distorted Paul's doctrine of grace into the slander, "Let us do evil, that good may come." Legalists could argue plausibly from the statement, "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly," the more sin the better, for then God would have more opportunities to exhibit his forgiving grace. Or ask: "Why need Christians work, since sinners can be justified without it?" By such babble, partially converted men, still under Adam's reign and therefore still trusting human merit instead of divine grace, could twist Paul's gospel into a deadly perversion. No wonder Paul recoiled in holy horror. To get something for nothing is so contrary to fleshly economy that to get, according to gospel economy, everything for nothing is just too much and too good for all except the wholly converted. Here is the solid core of gospel repentance, which, at its deepest level, is absolute turning away from defunct Adam to Christ. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Christ). The imperative transition from ruin in Adam to new life and another chance in Christ is the crux of Christianity. To realize that Romans 6:1-23 is an inspired commentary on an intensely personal verse Paul wrote the Galatians helps: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I (Adamic Paul) that lives, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh (mortal frame) I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). According to this, Paul reckons that his old man in Adam is an executed criminal, and that he is a new creature in Christ, who lives in him to body forth himself to the world—"The old shack under new management." In distilled essence, with even more emotional appeal and Christian motive, Romans 6 is all here. This verse is the key that unlocks Paul's conception of Christianity, and the secret of his own enigmatic, extraordinary life. A surrendered life gives Christ an outlet for his grace and power.

King and Subject

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body" (Romans 6:12). That this exhortation leans back on the first part of the chapter is shown by the "therefore." The connection is, now, since you reckon yourselves to be identified with Christ in his death and resurrection, make this faith an experimental reality in your lives; that is, reduce your faith to practice. Why this plea to Christians, if they have no choice in the matter?

Though saints by God's decree are dead to sin, sin itself is not dead. Instead of Paul's saying that sin is dead he says, "Reckon (believe what God says about it) ye also yourselves to be dead to sin." To make this death- to the power, pollution, and practice of sin, which are as real and tenacious as are its guilt and penalty, an actuality, saints must resist, learn by experience, and grow strong. To lift them immediately above the reach of sin would be contrary to the principles of moral and spiritual growth, and would therefore retard their Christian progress. God gives justification immediately, but he gives sanctification by another method. In men who refuse to leave Adam for Christ, sin reigns in death, as sailors who refuse to leave a doomed ship for a lifeboat drown; but sin in men who desert Adam for Christ is so counterworked and outlawed that it

cannot be king and tyrannize over them. Although the Adamic nature is not extirpated in men so long as they live in mortal bodies derived from Adam; and though the flesh and the Spirit, "contrary the one to the other" (Galatians 5:17), both live in a Christian, the flesh need ever reign, nay, can never reign, until his will goes along with the solicitation to evil. Does not this throw light on 1 John 3:9 : "Whosoever is begotten of God cannot sin?" A Christian is judicially and ideally dead to sin; if he sins it is against his will and endeavor. His heart is too tender toward Christ to hurt and grieve him by ingratitude and disobedience. He cannot callously and habitually sin; sin is a false note in his life and peace. Sin reigns over sinners, but not over Christians. Sin will pursue saints even unto the tomb, but they are always enabled to escape it.

All this underlies Paul's second reason in Romans 6:1-23 why saints cannot sin, namely, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Justification is a gracious, divinely wrought change in the lives of those who are justified. Since law effects no such change in relationship, cause for the consequent change in life is lacking. Law can make subjects and slaves, but it cannot soften hard hearts, break stubborn wills, and generate gratitude and love, as grace does. That his plea for Christian living may be effective, Paul roots it in divine grace, not 'in law and "will of the flesh." To lift men out of sin, they must be brought into a realm where grace, not law, is the constitution. Law and fear are not comparable to grace and gratitude in the power to purify.

Master and Slave When men hear the gospel, they must choose between the two Adams. Paul thanks God that the Romans have made this crucial choice correctly. The language in which he describes this pregnant change, "Obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered," reinforces the first part of the chapter. Christianity is not a moral code given to be lived up to in order to please God: rather, it is built on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which serve as a pattern for men's use in fashioning their Christian lives; that is, what Christ experienced bodily, they must experience spiritually. Nor does choosing a new Master exhaust human freedom. That Christians are still free to determine their course is shown by Paul's exhorting them to present their bodies, not to serve sin which leads to death, but to serve God which leads to eternal life—something no man can earn or give. Though Christians have a new Master to serve in a new kind of slavery, they are "called for freedom" (Galatians 5:13). And, strange paradox, they alone are "free indeed" (John 8:36). The chapter closes with the third reason why saints cannot sin: sin is too expensive; no man can afford it. Its seed is in it to bring forth fruit after its kind; it is a short circuit that wastes life. Sin is a faithful paymaster, but "nobody can live on the wages it pays." "The wages of sin is death" eternal.

Questions

What does gospel repentance involve?

Compare the respective methods by which men are justified and by which they are sanctified.

Does Christianity propose to extirpate a Christian's fleshly nature so that there will be no conflict between the flesh and the spirit?

Sin is not dead, and never will be in this world; but Christians are dead to sin. What is the difference?

Why are men under grace expected to resist temptation and sin more successfully than if they were under law?

Does the expression "the old shack under new management" describe a Christian's experience and life?

Christians must not sin purposely and regularly, and let sin reign over them, for sin belongs to sinners; and the fact that they are under grace is a powerful incentive to sinless living. Now what third reason does Romans 6:1-23 give why they cannot afford to sin?

04.15. LESSON 15

LESSON 15 The discussion of Justification closes with Romans 5:1-21, and the discussion of Sanctification follows in the next three chapters. To keep this and the fact that Romans was not divided into chapters until about 1250 A.D. in mind will help in studying these profound exceedingly important chapters. As we have seen, Romans 6:1-23 teaches that sinners upon becoming identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection are justified, and dead to sin. No matter how Christians feel about it, or what their experiences may be, they are to believe and count on these two things unfalteringly. They know by faith that they are justified, that hostilities between them and God have ceased, that the peace treaty has been signed, and that they, reconciled to God, are standing in grace. Therefore, their roots having struck down to living water, their souls, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, are at rest. Any doubt, or uncertainty, about free, full pardon, and death to sin, betrays a defective faith that prevents going on with God in assurance, and at least retards, probably defeats entirely, Christian sanctity, peace, and service. It dishonors God to remember and worry about what he forgets and expects us to forget; moreover; it is foolish, for it means frustration, unfruitfulness, and unhappiness.

Law and Gospel

Paul has made three statements in Romans concerning the relationship that exists between law and grace, which the Jews in their ignorance, pride, and prejudice considered very derogatory to their law. First: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). The Jews twisted this into meaning that Paul taught the Law itself was sinful. Second: "The law came in besides that the trespass might abound" (Romans 5:20). To the Jews, this questioned the priority and moral utility of their law; such they could not tolerate. Third: Christians "Are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Paul's enemies slandered him by accusing him of teaching that Christians, because they were not under law, had license to sin. That these are the objections to which Paul replies indicates that the Jews made them. To orthodox Jews, Paul was a great heretic. Even to many Jews in the church, he was either a heretic, or dangerously near being one. The mere thought of the time when these "false brethren" (Galatians 2:4) who followed Paul over Asia and Europe doing their utmost to pervert his work, and Paul meet for judgment at Christ's coming is enough to make all Christians exceedingly "slow to speak." Paul earnestly wrote such men: "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5). Even, were Paul's foes honestly mistaken, will they on that great day be like Paul the apostle, or Saul the persecutor?

Paul had not stopped to explain fully these statements, but, now in chapter seven, he is ready to discuss all three. Let no man think that an understanding of the difference between the respective working principle of law and grace is of small importance. Law is man-centered and turns on human wisdom, effort, and merit; grace is God-centered and turns on divine wisdom, love, and

activity. Under law, justification depends upon desert; under grace, it is conferred as an undeserved gift. These two kinds of religion (they exhaust the category) are poles apart in power, manner of working, and results. The church had never committed her greatest sin and blunder, nor suffered her greatest failure and defeat had she not faithlessly combined the principles of law and grace to concoct a law-gospel, which is neither law nor gospel. Paul's description of this bogus gospel reads: "Which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Galatians 1:7-8). Romans 7:1-25 might disclose to Christians today, who little suspect it, that they are afflicted with man-centered law-gospel, which is a deadly foe to sanctification and holiness.

Christians Are Dead To Lam

We are beginning a new chapter, but not a new subject. That men in becoming Christians are set free from one master, not to be idle, but to serve a new Master is taught in Romans 6:1-23. By changing from slavery to marriage, because it better shows the nature and function of law, Paul teaches the same lesson in Romans 7:1-6. The two metaphors are united in the slave-wife Romans 7:6. With a rhetorical question first, Paul emphasizes the common knowledge "That law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth." Then, further to emphasize the truth that death ends the claims of law, he introduces his figure of marriage. This figure in its application, though a mixed metaphor according to many commentators, makes clear to all commentators, so far as I know, Paul's point that death dissolves legal obligation. He wants the Jews to see that sin and law are so closely interwoven that they cannot die to sin without at the same time dying to their law also. To the Galatians in plainest language, without metaphor, "For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:19-20), Paul writes in this most personal way the same thing. Thus, he unequivocally teaches, once for all, that men cannot be alive to both God and a legal system at the same time.

Paul in Romans uses the simple truth that when a wife is left a widow, though dead as wife, she survives as woman, and is free to marry again to convince the Jews, especially, that in becoming Christians all men must die to law as well as to sin. Inasmuch as wives do not marry law, and instead of law dying, Christians die to law, to make law the first husband seems unwarranted. Although the argument does not require that the first husband be identified, it seems to me that to make him "Our old (natural) man (that) was crucified with him" (Romans 6:6) is consistent with the context and with Christian truth. In both wedlock and Christianity the emancipator that liberates from the law and gives freedom is death. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the (slain) body of Christ that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4).

Questions

What causes a Christian who has been baptized into Christ to doubt his justification and death to sin?

How does a Christian's lack of assurance about his justification effect his joy and spiritual growth?

Are the religion of law and the religion of grace so different that they will not blend into one religion?

Name two particulars in which the Jews perverted Paul's teaching. Can you account for these errors?

What truth does Paul illustrate by the use of the figure of marriage?

In what literal language does Paul write the same thing to the Galatians?

As Paul used the comparison of marriage, who is the first husband?

04.16. LESSON 16

LESSON 16 To disregard the chapter bar between Romans 6:1-21 and Romans 7:1-25 helps one to appreciate the coherence and fullness of Paul's argument on Sanctification. For instance, the representation of Christ and saints as King and subjects suggests warfare; as Master and slaves, service; as Husband and wife, fruitfulness.

Nature of Law and of Man

"When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Romans 7:5). This verse, adding to the thought of earlier statements in Romans about the law the expression, "the sinful passions which were through the law," is the basis of the discussion on the nature of law and of man which follows in Romans 7:7-24. From this passage, we may learn what both law and man are. In moral value, it far outweighs all merely human books ever written on law and psychology.

After stoutly denying that his gospel implies that the law itself is sinful, Paul adds: "Howbeit (nevertheless) I had not known sin, except through the law." Paul has been saying "we" in this chapter until now. I think he narrows down to "I" (used about thirty times) for the rest of the chapter, with one exception in Romans 7:14, in order to present in the liveliest way possible an elemental Christian truth, namely, that every man must be translated out of a man-centered kingdom into a God-centered one—out of Adam into Christ. In this chapter, we have our best opportunity to look down into the deep purposes and workings of law, and into the abysmal deeps, both conscious and subconscious, of our own personalities. Faithfully, should we study this great Scripture.

Paul says there was a time when he, unconscious of any sin in him, was satisfied with himself. But that when he came to see that the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," was meant to forbid all self-centered desires (Christ so interpreted Moses), he realized that the very impulse of his nature was unlawful. Sin, the seed of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15), which was lying dormant within, under the quickening touch of law crawled up into consciousness and fatally stung his self-satisfaction. The word "sin" occurs thirteen times in these verses, but the word "sins" is not found. This Scripture digs down deep to the sin-nature which expresses itself in sins. That no flesh is righteous before God becomes evident under law, the infallible detector of man's inborn evil propensities.

Whence come the proclivities of children to sin? Not from Adam as God made him. We need ever to remember that we are Adam's descendants after he became unfit to live with God. Children at a very tender age rebel against parental law, and guilefully try to hide their lawlessness. Were they left to themselves, would they ever know what is wrong with them? Apart from law, Paul would never have become conscious of his sin-warped nature. Men cannot get from Adam to Christ without Moses. The better one knows the law, the better he knows how great a sinner he is. Moreover, the essence of sin is rebellion, and prohibitions of law irritate tainted human nature and inflame it unto "all manner of coveting... that through the commandment sin might become

exceeding sinful." Law intensifies human lawlessness. After the law had thus revealed Paul unto himself, he lost his good opinion of himself, and became a self-condemned sinner. Certainly, this could not have occurred, however, had he been "totally depraved."

"For sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me." As Satan beguiled Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) through the lie that she could better her condition by eating the forbidden fruit, so he still through the lie that pious men can improve themselves by observing ordinances, and by using the law as an immediate rule of life, beguiles and betrays them. The trick is that men never obey God's law. Rather than improvement, therefore, all sorts of lawless desires are produced in them. Witness the Pharisees of Christ's time, including Saul of Tarsus. Thus, the law, by bringing the deep, unknown abscess at the root of human nature out to light, does its designed holy work of preparing honest men, despairing of legal advancement, to accept in genuine repentance the gospel of grace.

Note how Paul vindicates law through all this chapter. Law, which in its deepest and broadest sense represents the mind, will, and character of God, is coeval with God. Without disturbing the legal status of Gentiles, God added, for Jews, a national, provisional law to his universal, human law. The annulment of this Jewish law, when it had served its purpose, put Jews back under universal law again: but with the superlative gain of an opportunity to both Gentiles and Jews for justification, sanctification, and glorification in Christ. It is absurd to blame law for revealing man to himself in his inherent inadequacy as it is to blame a microscope for revealing germs in drinking water. That sin gets worse when treated with the perfect remedy, law, proves its desperate nature. Should it not crush down man's pride and self-sufficiency to learn from his friendly, faithful Maker and Redeemer that his state is such by nature that all merely human struggling after reformation only deepens his misery?

Paul's Three Men

Romans 7:1-25 has been called the problem chapter of the book. Expositors vary much about its autobiographic nature, and about whether the speaker is unregenerate or regenerate; some think that he passes from the former to the latter within the chapter. Since the main lesson, namely, that neither Paul nor any other man, whether unregenerate or regenerate, can in his own native strength redeem himself from racial ruin, can be learned without solving these problems, probably they have received more attention than they deserve.

About the same time at which Paul wrote Romans, he gave the Corinthians an exhaustive, threefold analysis of humanity as follows: natural men and spiritual men, with the latter subdividing into carnal and mature Christians (1 Corinthians 2:14-15; 1 Corinthians 3:1). One commentator very plausibly suggests that Romans 7:1-25 and Romans 8:1-39 are built around these three men, and that Paul as representative man describes himself as successively experiencing all three. According to this, the natural (unregenerate) man appears in Romans 7:7-13; with the change from past to present tense, the carnal Christian (unnecessarily prolonged babyhood in Christ) appears in Romans 7:14-24; and the spiritual Christian in Romans 8:1-17.

Questions

What was Paul's reaction to the thought the law itself is sin?

Can the word "sin" and the phrase "law of sin" used repeatedly in Romans 7 refer to sinful acts?

How did law convince Paul that human nature has "sinful passions" lying dormant within it? Is law to be blamed for revealing the fact that man has an inherent, sin-warped nature?

4, Unless man as a child of Adam is alive to sin, why does holy law increase human lawlessness, and work "all manner of coveting" in men?

How does law, which is the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:56), enable sin to beguile and slay men?

What attitude does Paul throughout Romans 7:1-25 hold toward law, toward sin, and toward man, respectively?

Suggest a way in which Paul's teaching in Romans 7:1-25 is probably related to his three men of 1 Corinthians.

04.17. LESSON 17

LESSON 17

Bear in mind that the subject of Romans 7:1-25 is, not Justification, but Sanctification—not how to obtain pardon for past sins, but deliverance from present indwelling sin. "Sin" is not evil deeds, but an evil principle, even "The law of sin which dwelleth in my members"—not primarily what men do, but what they are. It is a power, which impregnably entrenched in human nature, has "reigned in death" since the race, on probation in Adam, was "sold under sin" in Adam's fall.

Paul's "I of myself" is the key to his inability to find deliverance from the power and bondage of sin. His disability which causes the stern inner conflict and chaos, with its bewildering meeting of two seas of good and evil impulses and its pathetic "I would" and "I would not," so dramatically depicted, is the lack of power to do what his reason, will, and conscience, all, insist that he should do. "So now it is no more I that do it (what I hate), but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Surely, if it can be put into human speech, here is a man handicapped with a radical defect in nature, yea, an inherent evil tendency in his flesh that counter-works his earnest spiritual strivings, which he can neither eradicate nor master by himself—the animal runs away with the man. Paul is here laying the foundation for his teaching in the next chapter that, instead of Christians struggling in their unaided natural strength to take sanctification by force, they are to continue to take God's gifts, in God's way, as they have already done in the matter of justification. As for Paul himself, the carnal Paul of Romans 7:1-25 grew into the spiritual Paul of Romans 8:1-39 before he wrote the book of Romans.

Paul's Religious Evolution

Paul, who enters the Bible as an abettor of Stephen's martyrdom, is soon the determined, unflinching Jewish persecutor of the church. On his way to destroy the church in Damascus, he was apprehended by the glorified Christ speaking unto him out of heaven saying: "I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou halt seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16). Christ said of Paul at this time: "He is a chosen vessel unto me" (Acts 9:15), to preach and to learn suffering.

We learn from these two statements by Christ that communication between him and Paul was to be maintained. After Paul's conversion, Acts reports five more miraculous appearances to him. These appearances, however, thrust no magical spiritual growth upon him; his personal character grew, as do the characters of all Christians, according to mental and moral law. Paul's epistles allude to "visions and revelations of the Lord" as if they were not unusual; he describes one revelation in which he was "caught up into Paradise" for a most intimate, personal interview (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). From the biographic and autobiographic matter in Acts and Paul's letters, respectively, we learn vastly more about him—his views of life, death, the future; his purposes, labors, prayers; his fears, joys, tears; his sufferings, tribulations, burdens, and buffeting his body to keep it in subjection—than about any other early Christian. By combining Acts 9:1-43 and

Galatians 1:1-24, we learn that Paul began preaching in Damascus "straightway" after his conversion, and that his ministry there was broken into two periods of time by a visit into Arabia. Why this Arabian interruption? I think the logic of life and truth makes plausible the inference that, when Paul encountered the inevitable opposition, he, but a babe in Christ honestly mistaken, tried to meet it, as he had always met opposition, in his own superior natural strength ("I of myself"); and that Christ to forestall this wrecking of Christianity and to season Paul for his chosen work, sent him, willing to learn, into Arabia as a fit place to guide him into a better understanding and assimilation of his new religion. "Visions and revelations" in Arabia are not improbable. Like wrestling, striving Jacob of old (Genesis 32:22-32) Paul had to come to an end of himself before he could be "a prince of God." To convert a learned, proud, respected, self-occupied Pharisee, who had been laboriously "blameless" in all the more than six hundred laws and traditions of his party for some twenty years, into a Christ-occupied man, which meant becoming "the filth of the world," was a catastrophic dissolution and re-creation. The evolution of Saul into Paul was a tremendous achievement, utterly beyond all human working, but possible "Through faith in the working of God" (Colossians 2:12). Probably it took the time in Arabia plus a few years of Paul's relative obscurity as apostle before he began his mission travels, or even longer, to bring him up to the spiritual elevation where he could say: "I have learned... the secret both to abound and to be in want... I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." His going up to Paradise occurred during these obscure years. When the extreme difficulty of any man's, especially a man of Paul's natural strength and background, renouncing flesh and legal righteousness; and of realizing that should his striving eventually lift him to the pinnacle of human morality and religion, even there, the wrath of God awaits him—when these things, and the fact that so few Christians ever learn suffering and self-abnegation for Christ's sake, as Paul did, are taken into consideration, the inference I think, becomes all the more reasonable. Certainly, it is not "contrary to the doctrine" we have learned. As it has benefited me, may it benefit others.

Paul Chosen as Apostle and as Pattern

Paul's wholly yielding himself up to Christ's making gave Christ a fit instrument to demonstrate what he can do for in, and through men who do not mar their making by trying, in their own fleshly strength, to help him out. God cannot save men until they cease trying, by law and unaided self-effort, to save themselves. Christ chose Paul Gentile apostle and Christian pattern because he knew what he could make out of capable, willing, suffering, cooperating Paul. This explains, I think, why Luke and Paul himself were moved by God to write down so fully Paul's case history. "It was not written for his sake alone... but for our sakes also." Five times, Paul exhorts his "children" to "imitate" him—a thing no one of the other seven writers of the New Testament does even once. How profoundly interesting and profitable when an earnest, experienced, wise "man of God" unlocks to others, in so far as is possible, the secrets of God's dealings with him.

Questions

Name and define the general subject Paul is discussing in Romans 7:7-25.

When Paul says, "I know that... in my flesh dwelleth no good thing," what does he mean by his flesh?

What is the "sin" which Paul says dwells in him and defeats his good intentions? Is "the law of sin" in his members, warring against the law of God and bringing him into captivity, the same thing?

Can the stern moral struggle depicted in this Scripture occur in a man who is not a Christian?

Why does it ever occur in a Christian?

State some of the hurdles which Paul cleared as he grew into a pattern saint.

Summarize the view of "Paul's religious evolution" presented in this "Study" and tell what you think of it.

04.18. LESSON 18

LESSON 18

Paul's history of Redemption has reached near the close of Romans 7:1-25 the point where Christians who, after having accepted justification as a gift from God, have struggled in their own natural strength to live the Christian life only to know the self-contradictory life described in the chapter, and therefore have been driven to acknowledge they lack power to do what they will to do. At this crisis in their lives, three courses are open to them. First: unaware of the help at hand, they may, disillusioned and discouraged, give up the unequal, nay the impossible, struggle and drop back into the world. Second: while "first love" oozes away as it oozed away at Ephesus (Revelation 2:4), they may settle placidly to the mechanical routine of church-going with its cold, dead formalities, and to a life of holding to fixed partial truth and party as the best they may expect. Paul would ask them as he asked the Galatians: "Are ye so foolish? having been in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Romans 3:3). As if to say, it is the height of folly when Christians presume to disregard any part of Christianity as being unnecessary. Third: they, knowing that the God who provides the Blood of Calvary for pardon does not stop there, but goes on to provide also the necessary power of Pentecost to enable them to live sanctified, spiritual lives, may go on and up to climb the heights of Romans 8:1-39. The failure of Christians to understand the design and the inner workings of their religion, thereby causing them to stick between Calvary and Pentecost, futilely trying to stretch the natural up to the supernatural, often prevents their entering upon this third course. It is so much in the blood of natural men to be self-sufficient that it is most difficult even for Christians to realize that sanctification is no more by struggling self-effort than is justification—that both are by faith. Christians who think they can live unselfish lives without continued and continual superhuman aid do not know how deeply sin has wrecked their nature, and therefore are not fully convicted of sin, thoroughly humbled in the flesh, and genuinely "poor in spirit." Could such but take God's verdict upon "flesh" (Genesis 6:4), throughout the entire Bible, they would see that, instead of suffering from a slight functional disturbance, they are mortally stricken with a deep organic disease beyond human treatment. Not until men know how desperately and hopelessly sick they are, can they, in despair, with the faith of a child, yield themselves over wholly and finally to the Great Physician. The heresies that plagued the early church, beginning even in the days of the apostles, pertained largely to the nature of Christ. There was but little trouble over the nature of man until Pelagius in the fifth century, questioning "original sin" and its consequences, taught that men needed no blood atonement, for they were able to work out their salvation by themselves.

Surely, the fact that many Christians only partially learn this essential lesson of Romans 7:1-25, and consequently never cease trying to conquer the sin that dwells in their flesh by their own fleshly strength and character accounts for some of the worldliness, discouragement, and lukewarmness in the church. God in wisdom and kindness, eager to help saints of all time learn this self-effacing truth, had Paul, his pattern saint, sprinkle, generously, over his writings the manner of his coming by this hard-learned, cardinal principle of Christianity.

Law Fulfilled in Christ (Romans 8:1-4)

Coming out of Romans 7:1-25 into Romans 8:1-39 is coming out of storm into calm. "I of myself" has disappeared, and Christ through the Holy Spirit takes his place. The Spirit wholly absent in seven, dominates eight. Now, the ineffectual struggling Christian settles quietly into Christian gears, and works smoothly and efficiently. In this unspeakably important and rich chapter, Christians learn how to keep sin from having dominion over them (Romans 6:14).

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." This conclusion, based on the close of Romans 7:1-25, is also cumulative, and really gathers up the doctrine of the entire book thus far. Saints identified with Christ in death and resurrection life, as members of the human body are identified with the head, are no more condemned than Christ is condemned. This verse gives the position of Christians, standing and rejoicing in grace.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." In this verse, "law" does not mean a code of precepts, but an operating principle, or force, such as is the law of gravitation. "The law of sin and death" cannot be God's law, "Which is unto life...holy, and righteous, and good." It is "A different law... bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23). It is the inherent evil force that dwells in fallen men to drag them down to death. "The law of the Spirit of life" is the operative force that resides in the gospel. Just as blood is the redemptive price, the life-giving Spirit is the redemptive power.

"For what the law could not do... God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." "Law" here is the law of Moses, which ever condemns, never gives life. Paul is careful to say that Christ was only "in the likeness of sinful flesh." "The first man Adam" was sinless flesh until he disobeyed God. "The last Adam," having never disobeyed his Father, did not lose his sinless flesh. His propitiatory death, "As of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," "condemned sin in the flesh," and paid the penalty for the whole condemned race of men.

"That the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Paul expresses the same thought when he says, "Love worketh no evil to his neighbor: love is therefore the fulfillment of the law, something law could not do. Christianity is God's way to lead men to be lawful like himself. Only Christians can know the flood tide of the conjunction of grateful love and "The power of the Holy Spirit" within to induce and sustain yearnings after holy and legal living.

Questions

What point in the history of redemption has been reached at the close of Romans 7:1-25?

At this crisis in a Christian's life, state three courses, one of which he must take.

At this juncture, what often prevents a Christian's taking the correct Christian course?

Are justification and sanctification equally above the reach of purely human working?

Account for the new atmosphere encountered in coming out of Romans 7 into Romans 8:1-39.

Contrast the workings of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ" and "the law of sin and death" in the flesh.

Of all the men who have lived, how many of them at any time during their lives have ever possessed sinless flesh?

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04.19. LESSON 19

LESSON 19 As a Jew, Paul thought he had to obey law in order to be saved. As a Christian, he learned he had to be saved before he could obey law. That is, he had to become a Christian by a supernatural spiritual birth, and then go on to use the enabling supernatural Christian means in order to live up to the requirements of God's law; had to die to law as the immediate means, and be alive to the mediate Christian means, ever to attain "The sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." In order to make this supreme truth of Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 clearest and most compelling, Paul tells his own experience by way of example. The tragedy of the church has been (and is) that too many Christians, instead of following Paul's example, have regarded Christianity largely as another legal system to be fulfilled chiefly in "the will of the flesh." As a consequence, they have continued to be almost as self-centered and legally minded after as before baptism. Legalism, because it is man centered and presupposes a human power and merit which natural men do not possess, must ever fail.

"The Flesh"

"The flesh," found in the last line of Romans 1:1-25, is found twelve times (about the same number as its opposite, "The Spirit,") in Romans 8:1-13; thus the two chapters are bound together. The better we understand this term, the better can we understand, appreciate, and appropriate Christianity. In his statement to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," Christ sets the flesh and the Spirit over against each other as mutual opposites. He fixes such a gulf between them that the flesh can never evolve into spirit. According to this, men are either fleshly or spiritual, never both. Christ repeatedly makes this two-fold classification of men. He parabolically divides soil into productive and nonproductive, nations into sheep and goats, trees into good and corrupt, and ways into broad and narrow. He says to the multitudes, "He that is not with me is against me;" and to sectarian John, "Forbid him not; for he that is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). Thus, Christ divides humanity into two broad classes, without the possibility of a third class—the once-born and the twice-born. The disposition either to add a third class or to run these two classes together into one class is unmoral, ungodly, and anti-Christian. Of course subclasses exist. In the parable of the sower, there are three kinds of productive and three kinds of unproductive soil. The broad road to destruction has a dirty and a clean side, as is illustrated by the two brothers in Christ's story of the Prodigal. If the elder brother is on a higher rung of the ladder of human responsibility and merit, the trouble about that is the ladder never reaches heaven. Church and world here; heaven and hell after here. Did God create "the flesh"? No. He created Adam innocent, with sinless nature, or flesh, and Adam by his ungrateful rebellion perverted himself into "sinful flesh." His treachery shifted the moral center from God to man, which upset the delicate unity and balance of his nature and personality. After this treason, he and his posterity, "begat in his own likeness," constitute "the flesh." The body is "the body of sin" because sinful flesh uses it as its agent.

God prepared a body for Christ (Hebrews 10:5), and he "became flesh and dwelt among us." However, as he never disobeyed God, he was only "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Unlike Adam, he repulsed Satan's temptations, and therefore never lost his sinless flesh. Flesh as God made it is "very good." But of all men, only "the first man Adam," for a time, and Christ, "the last Adam," for all time, have possessed such flesh. "The flesh" and equivalent phrases such as "the old man," "the natural man," "I of myself," "sinful flesh," and "this world" denote the God-discarding, Serpent-following, man-centering (remember Eden) part of humanity that never finds deliverance from condemnation in Adam to justification in Christ—Christians and "the rest" of men (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

"The Spirit" The Holy Spirit enters the Bible in Genesis 1:1-31 as the power to perfect creation, and continues throughout the Bible as power. We read that "the Spirit of God" spoke through false men such as Balaam, king Saul and Caiaphas, and worked through judges, kings and prophets. John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit" from birth. God must have wanted readers of the Bible to get the impression that the Holy Spirit, without the violation of mental or mortal law, has access at will to human minds. At the baptism of Jesus, the three Persons of the sacred Trinity are distinguished—Jesus being baptized, God speaking from heaven, and the Spirit descending and abiding on Jesus. Mark says, "And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth into the wilderness" for Satan's temptings. The Spirit came and "abode upon him" during his life and work. "God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Christ's whole ministry is a commentary upon this verse. He cast out demons by the Spirit of God.

Throughout the Bible superhuman power is associated with the Spirit, as blood is with Christ. Inasmuch as it would be unlike God to waste power as he marches on to establish his redemptive kingdom, Christ shares the Spirit with his disciples, preparing them for their duties after his death. According to his last speech to the apostles (John 13:1-38, John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26) the Spirit was to abide with them and to be in them to comfort, refresh their memories, guide them into new truth, and convict the world. The idea of the Spirit's abiding with and being in the whole community of God's people, as distinguished from the world, for an age, was new. After his resurrection, Christ told his apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49). At his ascension, he said to them: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The Spirit came in power on Pentecost, "And with great power gave the apostles their witness." Would not the poor, beaten Christian of Romans 7:1-25 be profoundly grateful that his religion provided power beyond his own?

Questions

What change in Paul's means for living a lawful life did his becoming a Christian make?

Why must any religion based on law (legalism or legality) fail to produce men who keep law as Christ interprets law?

Suggest a reason why Paul's religious case history is given with exceptional fullness in the New Testament.

By using equivalent terms show in what sense the Bible uses the phrase, "the flesh." What, then, is "the flesh"? Did God create it?

How do the happenings at the baptism of Christ show that the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person, just as God and Christ are distinct Persons?

Prove by Christ and Paul that "the flesh" and "the Spirit" are mutually antagonistic and exclusive, and that flesh can never become spirit.

Should a reader of the Bible get the impression that the Holy Spirit, without violating human freedom, may directly influence men's minds?

04.20. LESSON 20

LESSON 20

We live in a power-conscious age—mechanically, economically, and politically. A competitive race to make machines of more horsepower, corporations of more economic power, and states of more political power is on among the nations. Power is so highly valued by men that Satan, the wily adversary, can use this craze for counterfeit power as a most deceptive, disastrous tare. True power, however, is the ultimate test of religion. The powerless Christian of Romans 7:1-25, was not a success. That spiritual power is contingent upon the Christian functioning of the Holy Spirit is taught throughout the New Testament. Christ's sermon in the Upper Room is the basic teaching on this subject. Next in fullness and importance, probably, is Romans 8:1-39. "Anyone who wishes to know the New Testament connotation of Spirit must use his concordance also for the term 'power' which is its chief content" (James Denney).

"In the Flesh" verses "In the Spirit"

"The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:6-9). No passage in the Bible paints the flesh in darker colors than this one does. It makes the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit utterly exclusive of, and hopelessly antagonistic to, each other; and makes the possession of the Spirit the dividing line between the two ways of life. The natural man not only does not, but cannot please God. He may be rich, cultivated, likable, and pleasing to others, but without the Spirit he is none of Christ's and therefore cannot please God.

"There is therefore a sin of our nature as well as personal transgression... Our nature was corrupted by the fall of Adam before it was transmitted to us; and hence that hereditary imbecility to do good, and that proneness to do evil, so universally apparent in all human beings... All inherit a fallen, consequently a sinful nature, though all are not equally depraved" (Alexander Campbell, Christian System, page 30.). Campbell also says: "It is impossible" for "man in his present preternatural state... to do anything absolutely pleasing and acceptable to God."

Though God in Christ condemns sin in the flesh, he does not extirpate it abruptly as 'if by magic. In this world, he proposes to see that Christians "no longer be in bondage to sin," and under the tyranny of the flesh, in which still "dwelleth no good thing." Of course, he does this only with the full consent and faithful cooperation of Christians, who, instead of struggling directly with the flesh, "present" themselves unto God for him to deal with it in his own way. Almighty God, an infinitely wise and gracious Father, knowing that his bruised human children are unable to break the octopus grip of sin in their unaided human power, infallibly gives superhuman Power so as best to promote victory, strength, and spirituality in them. The Christian who tries it finds that it works, for

his mind and his will remain his own; and his whole personality grows ever stronger, purer, sweeter, and more trustful until he can say, "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

"The Body of This Death"

"And if Christ is 'in you, the body is (still) dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:10) —primarily Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness. This teaches, I think, that a man's being a Christian does not prevent his dying. And that when his condemned body goes to the grave, his redeemed spirit, unbodied, goes to "be with Christ" (Php 1:23) to wait reunion with the re-deemed body at the resurrection. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). These unbodied saints will be with the Lord at his coming, and get their redeemed, glorified bodies, marvelously changed in substance but seemingly not in appearance, back to live in forever (1 Thessalonians 4:12-18). Christ's resurrection is the first-fruits of our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23), and therefore our risen bodies will be like his risen body (1 John 3:2). According to Thessalonians, the generation of Christians who are living when Christ comes will be delivered "out of the body of this death" by way of instantaneous translation (1 Corinthians 15:52), as Enoch was translated (Hebrews 11:5); and "shall together with them (the risen) be caught up... to meet the Lord in the air."

"Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9) wrecked triune man—body, soul, and spirit. That God's redemption of triune man culminates in the resurrection of the body 1 Thessalonians 5:23 teaches: "And the God of peace himself shall sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And thus either by resurrection or by translation final deliverance of all saints "out of the body of this death" is achieved. Of these two ways for saints, "preserved entire," to enter the "new heaven," Paul, according to 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, certainly preferred translation. But it was not so to be, and Paul has been with Christ, which "is very far better" (Php 1:23) than remaining in a dying body, all these centuries "waiting for... the redemption of his body" (Romans 8:23). Who can envision the rapture with which Paul will again live in his redeemed body that in some way inscrutable to men preserves, as new wheat preserves the identity of seed wheat (1 Corinthians 15:35-49), the identity of the body in which he so long ago lived and suffered?" "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (Php 3:20-21). "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Questions

What connection does James Denney see between the Holy Spirit and power?

What did Alexander Campbell think about Adam's tainted nature being passed on to his posterity, and about fallen man's ability to please God?

Why is it that "the flesh" never does, and never can, please God?

What constitutes the dividing line between fleshly men and spiritual men—between the world and the church?

Name the two distinct ways by which the bodies of Christians will get into heaven at last.

Does Christ's being the first-fruits of our resurrection mean that our risen bodies will be like his recognizable risen body?

On what condition is the Holy Spirit to be used in the resurrection of our bodies?

04.21. LESSON 21

LESSON 21

"So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh: for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8:12-13 are the conclusion of Paul's teaching on the two ways of life (Romans 8:1-13), dealing with the inveterate conflict between the flesh and the Spirit decreed by God at the beginning of human history when he cursed the serpent, saying: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed." Not only Paul and his contemporary brethren, but also all Christians of all time, know by experience this deep, continual warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. In this conclusion, Paul reminds Christians that since "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), and an therefore never bring anything but death, they certainly owe it nothing. He also focuses the cardinal Christian truth that the flesh is such a curst, powerful, determined foe that only "By the power of the Holy Spirit" can Christians ever escape defeat and death.

Working of the Holy Spirit His workings in our behalf, according to Romans 8:1-39, are as follows:

Delivers us from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

Indwells us and enables us to make judicial death to sin even more and more a practical reality. This progressive spiritual growth culminates in even spiritual bodies at the Lord's return. In this manner, the ravages of sin are completely abolished (Romans 8:3-11).

Leads us as sons of God (Romans 8:14).

Gives us the spirit (not of legality) of adoption as mature sons (Romans 8:15).

Witnesses with our spirit concerning our sonship and heirship (Romans 8:16-17).

Prays for us with unutterable groanings (Romans 8:26-27).

In the only verse of Romans that mentions the Holy Spirit before this Spirit-filled Romans 8:1-39, is found another of his works in and for us, namely: "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Romans 5:5). The context shows that this is the love of God for us. Of innumerable corroborative Scriptures, two must suffice. First, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians: "That ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ("According to your faith be it done unto you")... Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory." Second, Jews and Gentiles are a temple "builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22). The fact that these passages teach that God, Christ, and the Spirit all three reside in Christians sheds light on the nature of both God and Christianity. It took "The three-personal God" a long time to build his church. After working some 4000 years as Father, especially, he had things ready to proceed by

working as Son, too, and therefore brought Christ actively into his redemptive scheme with the announcement, "This is my Son, my chosen; hear ye him." Finally, all things were ready for the Father and the Son working together as Spirit to proclaim on Pentecost, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." This method is suggestive of the method of the relay footrace.

Ever since Pentecost, the Spirit's work has been the Trinity focused and at work saving men—the Father for us, the Son with us, and the Spirit in us. The Spirit's saying "come" is the Trinity's saying "come"; the Spirit's dwelling in us is the Trinity's dwelling in us. This mutual interdependence and essential oneness of the Trinity (though the three never merge into one Person) is implicit in all the Bible. Especially, is it taught explicitly in Christ's farewell address to his apostles (John 13:1-38, John 14:1-31, John 15:1-27, John 16:1-33, John 17:1-26), and in Paul's writings. By virtue of God's drawing nigh to us in his Son and dwelling in us in his Spirit, we may become partakers of the divine nature, which is the end of the redemptive process for this age. By grace we are related to God in Christ through the Spirit.

Christ Dishonored To give the Spirit prominence over Christ, as some cults do, is a fatal perversion of the gospel. The verse, "No man speaking in the Holy Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema; and no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3), shows that one's attitude toward Christ is the test whether or not he really possesses the Spirit. Just as Jesus declares and glorifies God, so the Spirit declares and glorifies Christ. "He (the Spirit) shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak... He shall glorify me... All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13-15). God in the Son, in the Spirit, through the word is the cumulative divine order. The word as seed is "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." As in nature, seed, under the genial powers of soil and sun, springs up and grows, man knows not how: "So is the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:26-29). In both the natural realm and the spiritual realm, seed, instead of being an end within itself, is an indispensable means unto harvest. To hostile Jews, Christ said: "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39-40). Hence, doctrine about Christ does not give life; it takes Christ himself to do that. Of course, without seed it is equally impossible in nature and in religion to reap; nevertheless, the seed is not the harvest. Christians in whom the Lord dwells richly will be "filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52).

It is not necessary to explain "the mystery of godliness." Christianity cannot be proved rationally because it meets us above human reason and scientific measurement. If it is anything, it is superhuman and supernatural. If Christians lose the mystic element of their religion, they of necessity become mechanical, and run into a dead end. When men cease to wonder, they cease to worship and pray. Were everything known, where were the occasion or the need of faith? Faith and reward suffer no damage in either nature or religion when truth, though not fully understood, is believed and obeyed. By faith is human reason put to its divinest use.

Questions

Why do men owe the flesh nothing?

When and how is man's rescue from the ravages of sin completed?

In what way may the building of the church be compared to a relay race?

Enlarge upon the statement that since Pentecost the Spirit's work has been the Holy Trinity focused and at work saving men.

With respect to the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit, how do some cults dishonor Christ and pervert his gospel? R, Does doctrine about Christ within itself give life?

Do Christians necessarily lose anything because they cannot understand everything intellectually?

04.22. LESSON 22

LESSON 22 The solidarity and the interlocking works of the Holy Trinity throughout the universe (one turning), both physical and spiritual, are cardinal doctrines of the Bible. A good example of such working is Christ's resurrection being attributed to God (Hebrews 13:20), to Christ himself (John 2:19), and to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). Not only does the Spirit reveal and glorify Christ, but Christ also holds the Spirit in high reverence and honor. Take for instance, his solemn statement: "Every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven." And his, "The Spirit of truth... abideth with you, and shall be in you... 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 go, I will send him unto you," to show Christ's reliance upon the Spirit's supplementary, climactic work. The Spirit in no sense supplants Christ. His dispensational work is to communicate Christ to us. It is our privilege and responsibility to enter into vital, personal relations with the Spirit, Christ's personal representative, yielding to his leadership, support, and comfort, both externally and internally for his service on our behalf is not limited to bearing "witness to us" (Hebrews 10:15), fundamentally, but also includes bearing "witness with our spirit that we are children of God." In that measure that these relations are established, we shall be conscious of Christ's presence, have his mind, be occupied with him, and be conformed to his image—Christ in us through the office of the Spirit by virtue of which we share one life with Christ. The Spirit's ministry is fulfilled as Christ is made known, believed on, obeyed, worshipped, and appropriated.

However, we may so ignore and depose the Spirit as to strive and live on a merely human level, as does the Christian in Romans 7:1-25. A brother wrote years ago: "Today, when we baptize, we might better perform the ordinance in the name of the Father, the Son, and the word." Extreme, no doubt. None the less, we must remember the Spirit's warning against resisting, grieving, and quenching him; and that nothing less than the possession of the Spirit himself is God's Christianity.

Mode of the Spirit's Ministry

"Ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." A parallel verse reads: "God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). The fact that the cry is attributed to both the Holy Spirit and the human spirit in these verses throws light on the problem of how the Spirit continues to lead Christians, to bear witness with them, and to pray for them, as Romans 8 says he does, after they, by obeying his written requirements for becoming Christians, have opened up the way for his entrance and ministry.

Additional light is found in Acts 16:6-10. Paul being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia, assayed to go into Bithynia, but being again forbidden by the Spirit, he went to Troas, where in a vision a man of Macedonia invited him over into Europe. Paul, "concluding" ("assuredly gathering" – KJV) that God was leading, went to the new continent. This synthetic mosaic divine guidance is most instructive. Even in the days of miracles, the Spirit did not make mere puppets of those whom he led. Later, Paul wrote: "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1

Corinthians 14:32). Just as we do today, Paul had to do his own divinely supervised reasoning and "concluding." He could have willfully decided not to go to Macedonia. Incidentally, this blending of the divine and the human, as it is in Christ and in the Bible also, explains why Romans 8:1-39 does not always clearly distinguish between the Holy Spirit and human spirits.

It is not true only that "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter 1:21), but true also that Christians are "Strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians 3:16). That the Spirit's manner of entering, permeating, impregnating, and identifying himself with human spirits, both to write and to cry "Father," so that the result is the joint-product of the two, is not a logically demonstrable matter, transcends our present comprehension, and is not fully revealed, affords rich, deep soil for simple faith and honest trust. Is it not enough for us to know that the Holy Spirit, without violating human nature, can make our surrendered spirits, to their great enrichment, his organs? Enough to know that he can reproduce his holy life in us so as to make it our very own, free life? Who are we, with all of our consummate ignorance of the nature and workings of spirits, even of our own spirit, to question revealed Christian truth! Faith has reasons of her own, which lie above man's rationalizing. The flesh is "a strong man," which Christianity does not propose to eradicate in this world. Rather, the Holy Spirit, "a stronger than he," binds him by so counteracting him that he "shall not have dominion"—the strong meets a stronger. This is the principle that enables motors in an airplane, not to suspend, but to counterwork the law of gravitation. The Christian fights the flesh, not in his sole, natural strength, directly, but fits into this Christian way of reckoning himself to be dead to sin, law, flesh, and self so that the Spirit, unimpeded, may produce his nine-fold cluster of golden fruit in him. The author of this sublimely spiritual chapter (Romans 8:1-39) was himself, as all his writings attest, always keenly conscious of the presence and activity of a divine energy, wisdom, purity, and efficacy within him far beyond and above his superior native endowments. This is what caught him up out of the futile eddies of unaided self-effort into the mighty stream of God's eternal purpose, dissolved his self-contradictory dualism of Romans 7:1-25, prevented his being shattered on law, unified and energized his whole personality, and made him the most vital man in history, save Christ. This is what keyed life up to such peerless heights of power, zest, achievement, and peace. He wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Just as all Christians must do, Paul on the adventure of holy faith, proved the pudding by eating it. God grant that we too, as he so frequently and fervently prayed and exhorted that we might do, may imitate his faith and life, as he followed in Christ's steps. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (Paul).

Questions

Does Christ rely upon the supplementary, climactic work of the Spirit?

What constitutes the Spirit's ministry with respect to Christ during the present dispensation?

In studying the mode of the indwelling Spirit's work, what help may be derived from the fact that the Holy Spirit and the Christian's own spirit conjointly cry, "Abba, Father"?

Show that the leading of the Spirit did not make a puppet of Paul.

What does the statement, "Faith has reasons of her own which reach above human understanding," mean?

Upon what principle does the Holy Spirit counterwork (not eradicate) the flesh in Christians? Cite an analogous principle in nature.

Is it possible for a Christian now, doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace," vainly to strive and to live on a merely human level, as does the Christian in Romans 7:1-25?

04.23. LESSON 23

LESSON 23

God the Father imparts his own life to each of his children in a spiritual birth. Then the child has the privilege of growing up in the family of God into a mature son, who, when in sorrow, can always in "The Spirit of adoption"... cry, "Abba, Father," as Christ, his Elder Brother, in his deep sorrow, cried, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). In this beautiful, natural manner of little children and of Jesus, we should be "Waiting for (the full realization of) our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Mark 14:23), at his coming.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, whom God 'appointed heir of all things' " (Hebrews 1:2). Do we grasp the truly amazing import of these simple words? Angels are promised no such patrimony. Why are we so little excited about our inheritance? Paul knew the need of praying that Christians "May know the hope of his (God's) calling" (Ephesians 1:18).

God's Over-all Program The Maker of man built into both his physical and spiritual constitution the necessity of his dependence upon his Maker. Therefore when Adam revolted against God, the injury to himself and to his progeny was so constitutional, and to God so grievous, that God announced his sublime economy, conceived before the foundation of the world, of his Son's becoming man in order to woo man back to allegiance so that God and man working together might repair the wrongs each had suffered. Accordingly, the eternal Son, as seed of the virgin Mary, became God-man to found and to reign over a mediative redemptive kingdom, within the universal, eternal kingdom of his Father, until the rebellion should be put down. Then Christ, as triumphant Conqueror, shall deliver up his special kingdom to God, the Father. And "That God may be all in all," Christ, though crowned with the glory he had before the world was, shall be in subjection to God, who shall reign forever over "New heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." This, I believe, is a spiritual, skeletal outline, historic and prophetic, of the kingdom, or church, of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Revelation 21:1-8; 2 Peter 3:8-13). To give up this scriptural blending of God and man is to give up Christianity itself. Christ prayed to God for Christians: "That they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21). John, who heard this prayer, never forgot it, for his writings are saturated with its doctrine. "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (1 John 3:24). "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13). These Scriptures and many more such as, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11), chord perfectly with Romans 8:1-39, and with the symbolism of the Lord's Supper.

"Speak to him, for he hears,

and Spirit with Spirit can meet—

Closer is he than breathing,
and nearer than hands and feet."

According to the Bible, the Holy Spirit links Christians to Christ, who is both God and man—man as he was made, and is to be again when fully redeemed. As God, he is "The image of the invisible God," "The effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance." Christ said to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As man, Christ, during his life on earth as a man, was what

Adam, had he obeyed God, might have been. And since his resurrection even until now, he is what fallen man is yet to be; for at his coming, in the same body that arose from the tomb, that appeared to friends, and that ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11), "We shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). Bodily resurrection, instead of being something exceptional which lifts Christ to a life, inaccessible to others, is to be the common experience of all Christians—"Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming." This truth is what gives such tremendously vital, personal meaning to the fact of Christ's resurrection.

Life is God's first and last law. Abnormal, penal death, "the wages of sin," marks the entrance and exit of sin. In Genesis 1:1-31, Genesis 2:1-25, sinless, therefore deathless, man appears. Revelation 21:1-27, Revelation 22:1-21, "Though a wide compass be fetched," return to the starting place of sinless, therefore deathless, man. The intervening chapters are dedicated to God's spiritual way of winning foolish, sinning, suffering, dying man, "spirit and soul and body," back to life. "Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the dead?"

Suffering and Hoping

Romans 8:17-25 The suffering of these verses is not merely the unavoidable kind that sin has brought upon the whole frame of animate and inanimate nature, but also the inevitable kind that being in fellowship with Christ involves—the kind that Paul knew so well by choice. It is especially the non-meritorious suffering that chastens and conditions us to reign with Christ in glory. "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Unless we are led by the Holy Spirit as was Christ, it is impossible for us to possess his disposition to serve and to suffer; impossible for us to be his brethren and co-heirs, and to be promoted finally to the glory of perfected sonship. Suffering in general is the penalty of both sin and love. As a mother suffers with her suffering child, so God suffers with his suffering earth; as a shepherd and his lost sheep must meet at one place, so Christ and lost men come together in common suffering. May we with Paul look at present trouble through smoked glass, but at coming glory with unclouded eyes. This pregnant Scripture declares the all-pervading unity of the universe, the interdependence of rational and irrational creation, and Christ's kinship, even unto the dust of his body, with all created earthly things. It represents the whole world as groaning in birth throes, longing and hoping for deliverance from the decay, dissolution, and death that the colossal stupidity of sin has entailed upon it until "The blessed hope and appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12). Without such teaching, we could but hopelessly and helplessly stand aghast at the world-old waste and misery; with such teaching, we can patiently wait for the bad dream to end with the coming of the morning.

Questions

How do men enter God's spiritual family, and come to possess life?

What does it mean to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ?

What is the purpose and end of Christ's redemptive kingdom?

Can a Christian who does not believe in the blending of God and man in Christianity be a fully instructed and equipped Christian?

What does "Life is God's first and last law" mean?

What does it mean to look at our troubles through smoked glass, but at our coming glory with unclouded eyes?

How does this "Study" apply, "We can patiently wait for the bad dream to be over with the coming of the morning"?

04.24. LESSON 24

LESSON 24

Though being joint-heirs with Christ does not exempt us from the present suffering under which "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together" anymore than Christ was exempted from suffering, the sufferings of time weighed against the glories of eternity are as nothing. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit within us bears witness with our spirit that we are sons and heirs of God, we, already enjoying the first-fruits, hopefully wait for our full inheritance.

It should soften our hearts, enlarge our sympathies, and improve our conduct to recall how close even God's dumb creatures are to his paternal heart. In the beginning animals were not incompatible with sinless human society. God forbade Jews to muzzle the ox that trod out their grain. To hard-hearted Jonah, he gave one reason for not destroying Nineveh the fact that "much cattle" would suffer (Jonah 4:11). Not Even one little sparrow "Is forgotten in the sight of God," or "Shall fall on the ground without your Father" (Christ). Does not God expect everything in his Bible to help us to know, love, and trust him? When Christ made common cause with groaning creation, the beasts about his manger-cradle were affected, and since have fared better in Christian than in Christ-less lands. If a man is a Christian, even his dog finds it out. Any degree of Christ is better for this world than no Christ at all. The by-products of Christianity constitute the blessing of our modern civilization. Alexander Campbell wrote to the effect that those who nibble at Christ become civilized, those who eat lightly of him become moralized, and those who eat fully of him become Christianized.

"We Know Not..."

"And in like manner (as he bears witness with us and as hope sustains us) the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Who, tenting in a ruined, groaning world that "Lieth in the evil one, the old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world," can know how to pray as he ought? Infinitely intricate questions and deep, vast, eternal issues, utterly baffling to the best human brains and strategy, are involved in Christian prayer. At the climax of the world-old conflict between God and Satan for world-dominion, it seems that Christ himself felt the clash of alternatives in his praying. Upon the coming of the Greeks just before his cross, he prayed: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." A little earlier midst the wailing at the tomb of Lazarus, he groaned, prayed, and wept. It must have been the havoc wrought by Satan among the sons of men from Eden onward that moved him so deeply on this occasion. And in Gethsemane, sore troubled in agony and bloody sweat, he prayed: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Had there been no momentary reluctance in him, could we but feel that somewhat of real man were lacking? Surely,

these sacred incidents in the life of our blessed Lord stir us to our depths, take us into the heart of Christianity, God's kingdom for reducing the rebellion of earth, and fill us with holy awe, with a profound sense of racial infirmity, and with a spirit of tremulous prayer.

We Christians are so identified with Christ in death and in life (Romans 6:1-23) that God's mind is our mind and his interests are our interests, as "Ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23) puts it. The principle of Christ's in carnation is extended to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, who is thus, so to speak, "found in fashion as a man." He moves within us both to cry "Abba, Father" and to pray "with groanings which cannot be uttered" in such unison with our spirit that we are not conscious of any impulse or impression being independent of our own spirit. This is all according to the will of God, who, searching human hearts and knowing the mind of the Spirit, can interpret the inarticulate divine-human groanings. Cannot a mother project her understanding and feeling into the inarticulate cry of her baby, and know its needs?

These spiritual things make no sense to the natural man, for he "Receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...Things which entered not into the heart of man" (1 Corinthians 2:1-16). "The wind bloweth (Spirit breatheth) where it will" (John 3:8). Is it necessary for a small child to understand the discussion of its parents it overhears pertaining to its welfare? Does not Romans 8:26-27 have God, the Holy Spirit, and human spirits in communion without words? Who is so foolish as to say it cannot be? What may not be the potency of prayers wrought by the Spirit and presented by Christ to God! If we are living the unfulfilled lives of Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 tells why. Need it be said again that the word of God is the only seed that produces this unspeakably rich Christian harvest?

"We Know..."

(Romans 8:28-30)

"And we know that to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose." We do not know how to pray as we ought, but we do know that all things work together for good to lovers of God, because they choose to fall in with his purpose. The word, "purpose," is the key to this great Scriptures. To know that the eternal, unchanging Father "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) conceived his entire scheme, from beginning to end, for the redemption and glorification of fallen men, by leading them to become "conformed to the image of his Son," is enough for men of faith in God. Gratefully and freely, such men will to accept God's way. This purpose, yet in process of development, so compactly outlined here, 'is compatible with God's character as revealed in nature and in the Bible. It is in-conceivable that he does anything without foresight and his own approval; that he has no law and design concerning that which he in foreknowledge plans is unthinkable. Therefore, foreordination and the remaining items of Paul's outline, all essential parts of God's eternal purpose, follow inevitably and irrevocably. Hence, to question that everything works together for good to Christians is to challenge God's sovereign purpose, word, wisdom, grace and power. Verily, Christianity proposes to manage and to integrate all the circumstances and experiences of our checkered lives for our spiritual good. Do we believe it?

Questions

What does a glance at God's attitude toward his dumb creatures do to you?

What proof have we that Christianity has "promise of the life which now is" as well as "of that which is to come"?

What effect should the vast issues involved in prayer, which gave Christ cause to weep and groan, have upon the spirit and content of our prayers?

In what manner is the principle of Christ's incarnation continued in the Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit, too, is "found in fashion as a man"?

Does not Romans 8:26-27 have God, the Holy Spirit, and the spirits of men in communion without the use of words?

To question that all things work together for good to men who choose to give themselves to God's purpose questions what else besides this?

Should not a Christian who challenges these "deep things of God" examine himself, whether he is not still too much "the natural man (who) receives not the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14)?

04.25. LESSON 25

LESSON 25 The background of the Spirit's helping "our infirmity" (singular) in prayer is "the whole creation" lying in groaning misery under the ling misrule of usurping Satan, whose tyranny and power of death have been broken (Hebrews 2:14) so that "the whole realm of nature," in process of being delivered, may lift up its head in hope. About a matter of such huge dimensions, intricate problems, and prodigious issues, we especially need the aid of the Holy Spirit in prayer. In studying this scripture, it helps to keep in mind its context.

It is most difficult for fallen man, to whom God in the beginning gave dominion over all the earth, "And over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," to realize that, since his treachery and rebellion against God caused the miscarriage and distress of the earth, its restoration turns upon his unconditional surrender and penitent return to God. His constitutional "infirmity" is denying his fall, failure, and bankruptcy, proudly to spurn God's proffered help. Nevertheless, not until he comes to see the true state of affairs, I think, can he be convicted of sin in the full Christian sense, or repent in the full gospel sense.

We who are baptized into Christ, thus signifying our identification with him in death, life, mind, vocation, and destiny, surely should be groaning in spirit and praying as Christ, though he had no part whatsoever in causing the sorrows of the earth, groaned in spirit and prayed under the crushing weight of the world's woe at the grave of his friend. Only after we come to this heart-pricked, self-effacing condition can the Spirit of Christ witness with us and pray for us. Unless we have a real sense of our human inability to pray aright about the earth's deep wound; unless, as we raise our heads above the whelming flood of suffering and realize to what depths we were submerged, we feel a profound gratitude unto God for his deliverance, and, consequently, respond unto him with an unutterable passion of commitment unto him, how can the Holy Spirit in fellowship make "intercession for us with groanings which can not be uttered?"

God's Unshakable Purpose

(Romans 8:29-39) As if Paul feared the doctrine of Justification apart from law (Romans 3:4) might seem too good to be true and enduring, he immediately adds probably his strongest passage of Christian assurance (Romans 5:1-11), namely, that God's immutable character of pure, free grace and undying love gives the doctrine an unshakable bedrock foundation. The same thing occurs here again. After using Romans 8:1-28 dilating upon the work of the Spirit in, with, and for saints, ending with the astounding statement that all things work together for their good, he spends the rest of the chapter anchoring the doctrine of Sanctification and Glorification to the same unshakable bedrock of God's character and fixed purpose. His argument is that God's purpose from all eternity past to glorify men who freely choose him in Christ as they once freely rejected him in Adam, is unfolding through the running centuries as he ordained; that no opposition, demonic or/and human, can thwart it; that its success depends upon no contingency; that the purpose has built-in provisions for every need of willing, cooperative men, even their sorrows and disappointments becoming God's appointment for their good; and that the threefold groaning of

earth, under God's omniscient, gracious ruling and overruling, is but infallibly working out their final glory. Therefore, Paul, unafraid, looks out through all space and time, and issues his threefold challenge: "Who is against us?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" It is not a question of human strength, courage, and stability, for all who keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 1:21) live charmed lives, and are swept on to certain joint-victory with Christ? This truly eloquent, magnificent passage, quivering with ecstatic feeling and music throughout, ends in grand crescendo: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul hears a harmony in God's purpose as fulfilled in Christ through the Spirit that silences all earth's discords. God's ship may toss in stormy seas, but will not capsize.

"God Is One Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 6:4) In Luke 17:1-37, Christ says that, as the world in the days of Noah was too busy and too merry with fleshly things to think about spiritual things, so shall it be again at his coming. This is the setting of his parable (Luke 18:1-8) of the persecuted widow who cried to her judge until she got redress. Christ's application is: "And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night?... I say unto you, that he will avenge them." This parable teaches that despite outward appearances, the over-all, long-range divine government of the universe justifies patient, hopeful, Christian prayer. If Christians are mentally perplexed about the injustice, cruelty, and wretchedness of the world, they "Ought always to pray, and not to faint," for the almighty, moral-dealing God purposed before he created it to bring it at last to a good end. This world must therefore end right. Does not the fact that God is one, and that the universe and everything in it, is one orderly, closely knit whole help us to "know that to them that love God all things work together for good?" If the Creator has so ordered his world that everything favors "them that are called according to his purpose," should we not be grateful? God is the hinge upon which history turns. In his last interview with his brothers, Joseph summed up the tragic story of his life: "Ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." He saw at last that the cup of his life, bitterness and all, had been mixed by God's own hand. To make things work together for good is God's predestined purpose and prerogative. But alas and alack! how often do Jacob's false, foolish words to these same men, earlier, "Me ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me," befit our poor, unbelieving hearts? This blessed doctrine is not addressed, brethren, to our reasoning, but to our believing, faculties. On the great venture of faith and hope, may we try it out to find that it works. We must be afflicted and "suffer many things," but in spite of, nay, because of, this, we shall grow in peaceful trust and "mellow fruitfulness" of life. As an eagle in a storm may be lifted on wings, properly atilt, to calm upper air, so we in the storms of life may be lifted on Christian faith, properly atilt, to the serene heights of Romans 8:1-39.

Questions

What is the constitutional "infirmity" of Adam's fallen race?

On what condition can the Holy Spirit pray for, and with, us with unutterable groanings about the sorrows of earth?

What is the granite bedrock upon which Paul anchors the doctrine of the sanctification and final glorification of the saints?

Paul, ready for anything, thankful for everything, and afraid of nothing, issues what absolute, threefold challenge to all opposition?

Are you of Paul's "persuasion"?

Do you react to God's providence as did Jacob, or as did Joseph?

What do you, taking Christ's parable about the heartless judge and the suffering widow in its context, make of the parable?

04.26. LESSON 26

LESSON 26 Our "Studies in Romans" has covered Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, and concludes the strictly doctrinal part of the book. We have found that there are no good fallen men—"no not so much as one," "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"—just as there are no good fallen angels; have found that men are as powerless to change their fleshly nature by their own strivings, as an Ethiopian is to "change his skin, or a leopard his spots;" have found that a man-centered system of religion, based on man's living up to a code of law in his own strength, but reveals the sin in his nature and life, thus increasing his guilt and misery; have found, in short, that sin celebrates its triumph over man when their religion, even though given by God, is a legal covenant.

We have found, furthermore, that to men who see they cannot make themselves good, and are therefore ready to let God make them good in his way, God proposes to give, by means of a spiritual birth, a new, spiritual nature, which will bear fruit after its kind. This requires that men, repenting, admit the justice of their death sentence, gratefully accept Christ's execution in lieu of their own, and eagerly appropriate Christ's risen, glorified life as God's total answer to their total need; requires that they, in the power that God in Christ, through the Spirit, by the Bible supplies, live their Christian life, which is not merely the old, fleshly, Adamic life lived on a higher level, but which is a new order of life altogether, even eternal life, the very life which God himself lives.

According to the outline of Romans proposed in the beginning of our study these eight chapters pertain to "The Philosophy of Christian Birth and Maturity." We are now ready for the second major division of the book namely, "The Philosophy of Christian History" (Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36). The subject of these chapters, as given in the outline, is: "God created Christianity, past, present, and future, according to his will and grace for man's salvation and his own glory." In the days of Christ, the Jews were subject to Rome, and Palestine was an "occupied" country. But their proud spirit was unbroken, and their fierce patriotism and nationalism burned on. Had not Moses at the birth of their nation said to their fathers: "Thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God, and Jehovah hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 14:2); and "Thine enemies shall submit themselves unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deuteronomy 33:29)!

Partly, because Christ would not take sides with them against the Romans, the Jews rejected him. When Paul wrote Romans, about 57 A.D., nearly all the estimated more than 15,000,000 Jews scattered over the Roman world still thought Christ was a blasphemous impostor, who richly deserved the doom he suffered. Several years before he wrote Romans, Paul characterized them: "Who both killed the Lord and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved" (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16). To Jews, Paul, a Jew himself, who taught that Christ "Abolished in his flesh the enmity (between Jew and Gentile), even the law of commandments contained in

ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man,... fitly framed together,...buildded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:15-22), was a contemptuous traitor to all the nationalistic promises, hopes, and struggles of his race. That God was of "stones" raising up children unto Abraham was still, as in the days of John, intolerable heresy to the fiery, bigoted Jews. The important matter of the relationship of the Jews to Christianity is introduced in Romans 2:1-29, where Paul tells them that their soulless observance of annulled rites and ceremonies is but sitting by a burnt out crater, only to be dismissed in Romans 3:1, after slight notice of the involved questions of Jewish advantages and God's moral integrity. Now, in Romans 9:1-33, however, he is ready to face and discuss these questions. This glance at Jewish history, and at the structure of Romans, helps to a better understanding of Paul's method and doctrine in the artistic and skillfully executed Romans 9:1-33.

Paul's Preliminaries

(Romans 9:1-5)

"I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, by kinsmen according to the flesh." How is this great human, God-like cry, "White-hot with love and wild with all regret," this "wish of passion and power in which Paul's heart seems to be pumping blood through his pen" to be taken? In Paul's preaching, it was always "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). In fact, considering that, when Paul early in his ministry pleaded even with God that he be allowed to work among them Jews, he was commanded to "Depart: for I will send thee for hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:17-21); and considering how much unavailing (humanly speaking) trouble he would have escaped had he not later returned to Jerusalem against further advice of prophets, too, (Acts 21:1-40), one can but wonder if Paul, as many since have been so influenced, did not allow his "kith and kin" to influence him too much. Be that as it may, if Paul is to have an honest study with the Jews, he must first allay their groundless prejudice against him by convincing them that he loves them and has their best interest at heart. Hence, "His intense love for his brethren constrains him to contemplate himself as their victim, if such victim there could be" (Moule). As to whether or not such victim could be, God's answer to Moses, who proposed that he himself be blotted out of God's book instead of the Jews in the matter of the golden calf, is final. The answer: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, will I blot out of my book" (Exodus 32:33). Such shifting of moral responsibility is repugnant to divine sovereignty and moral dealing. It reverses God's will, robs Christ of a soul, and makes Paul a spiritual suicide. Could Paul really have dreamed of such things? His very words, "I could wish," imply preventing causes.

Paul's naming over nine great divine favors which distinguish the Jews from all other races further attract and conciliate them. They knew that he himself had once been "of the law found blameless," and had led the Jewish op-!position to Christianity. After this masterly preparation, Paul is now ready to reconcile, he hopes to ready readers, the equality of Jew and Gentile in Christ to the promise unto Abraham. Are we not ready, 'in our next "Study," to hear him too?

Questions

What do you learn from Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 about human goodness, man's ability to change his sinful nature, and the fruits of a religious, legal covenant?

Since the Christian life is not merely the old, fleshly, Adamic nature lived upon a higher level, what is it?

Give, according to our skeletal outline of Romans, the general subject of both Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39 and Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36.

Characterize the Jews of Paul's day, both politically and religiously.

Tell what the Jews thought of Paul, and give their reason for so thinking.

State two things that Paul did to conciliate the Jews and to get an honest hearing from them.

What was the chief difficulty that Paul had to explain to the Jews in order to convert them to Christ?

04.27. LESSON 27

LESSON 27

Romans 9:1-33 is a grand character piece. Generally speaking, it portrays God as the self-consistent Creator, who, as sole Owner and Manager of his human creature, does his own thinking and planning, makes and executes his own purposes and decisions, and assumes full responsibility for all consequences; it portrays man's proper place to be that of submissive, faithful servant, extremely thankful for the unspeakably great privilege of working under and with such perfect management. Specifically, the chapter shows that the Jews' being excluded from and the Gentiles' being included in the church is neither a breach of God's promise to Abraham, nor a surprise to God, inasmuch as he foretold it in the prophets. The argument, which involves the sovereignty, integrity, and providence of God, goes down to the very roots of all human history, political and religious. In the last of the chapter, the subject, namely, that Jews and Gentiles, alike, are responsible for their respective rejection or acceptance is introduced. This chapter, a masterpiece of art and cardinal truth, requires creaturely and reverent study. The contention of citizens of the United States today, should they insist that foreigners, as prerequisite to becoming Christians, must become citizens of the United States would be comparable to the arrogant, super-national contention of the Jews in Paul's day. They ignorantly thought that other nations could share in their covenant only by being absorbed into Israel, and thereby exalt and glorify Israel. As Paul's teaching that "There can be neither Jew nor Greek,... for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28) utterly and forever crushed these carnal hopes, they, with all the well-known strength of nature, tenacity of purpose, and intensity of feeling of the Hebrew race, fiercely opposed him. Paul's statement, written about the time he wrote Romans, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (2 Corinthians 11:24) is grim evidence of their inveterate, brutal hate and malice for him. Contrast with this his love for them!

God's Sovereignty The basic mistake of the Jews was their conceit that God was bound beyond recall to give them the blessings of Abraham's covenant, merely because they descended from him. Paul shows this to be a misinterpretation of the covenant: Not "Because they are Abraham's seed are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called." This covenant left God free to choose between Isaac and Ishmael as progenitor of the promised "Seed, which is Christ... And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:1-29). Abrahamic pedigree had its advantages but it did not make "children" unto Abraham.

Furthermore: "Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—for the children not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose a God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." In his own, free, unqualified right, God is here electing the branch of Abraham's offspring in the next generation through which Christ should come. Since Christ could not come through both the sons of either Abraham or Isaac, such temporal election was inevitable. But it has no more to do directly with the

eternal election, or non-election, of the souls of men, surely, than does the election that makes one man white and another black; or that makes white men differ basically in bodily, mental, and spiritual qualities. Thus, Paul establishes God's prerogative of choice.

Moreover, in "hating" (merely disregarding) Esau, God did him no wrong. Honor and favor to Jacob were no dishonor and disfavor to Esau. God finds fault with no man for being what his choice makes him. In his parable of the laborers, Christ has a deep, timeless word: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15). The envious, self-willed Jews never questioned God's election when it was for them, against Ishmael and Esau, but stubbornly and defiantly refused it when it went against them. Should not their bondage to tradition, blind prejudice, and glaring inconsistency be a stern warning to religious people of all ages and races?

God's Righteousness

Thus far, Paul has shown it to be a simple, indisputable, historic fact that God in preparing to send his eternal Son into the world as a man, instead of using the method of human descent or merit in selecting his human ancestors, exercised his own sovereign will to call Isaac and Jacob in preference to Ishmael and Esau. Now, he is to go further and show that God by the same principle of divine right acts in things more strictly in the moral realm.

"Is there unrighteousness with God" (Romans 9:14)? "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world" (Romans 3:6)? These questions touch moral bottom, absolute. To admit that God does wrong is to obliterate all moral distinctions, and bring in universal moral chaos and night. In the face of this dire extremity, Paul appeals, not to human philosophy, but again to the Bible to establish God's personal righteousness, and to vindicate his ways to man. In a few verses, he digs down to bedrock of all morality. Apart from God's own, inviolable character as unshakable foundation, all strivings after a righteous world come to naught.

"For he (God) saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." By referring to Exodus, we learn that God said this to Moses after Moses had read "The book of the covenant" to Israel at the foot of Sinai, and Israel had promised in blood, "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do and be obedient" (Exodus 24:7-8); after they, despite this sacred covenant, had promptly worshipped the Golden Calf, and escaped national destruction at the hand of their outraged God only by the intercession of Moses. As this flagrant breach of the covenant freed God from all covenant obligation, whatever he did for them subsequently must be of pure mercy and compassion. (Exodus 33:19). All this is the premise of Paul's general conclusion: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy."

It is taught here, only, that by God's mercy, not by human works or merit, do men acquire standing before God. Many other scriptures give the conditions upon which God bestows his mercy. Jews had to fear and love God, and keep his commandments (Deuteronomy 5:10; Psalms 103:13). All know that now God has mercy only on those who come to him through his Son Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 2:10).

Questions

What information pertaining to the nature and character of both God and man does Romans 9:1-33 give us?

What was the basic mistake of the Jews relative to the Abrahamic covenant?

How does Paul establish God's prerogative of choice?

Define the ground that the election of God, which Paul is discussing in Romans 9:1-33, covers.

After proving God's sovereignty of choice, why and how does Paul establish his righteousness and integrity of personal character?

By what reasoning does Paul reach his conclusion, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy"?

Apply Christ's "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil because I am good?" to the matter under consideration in Romans 9:1-33.

04.28. LESSON 28

LESSON 28 For morally insolvent and ruined men to accept God's mercy at Sinai, or at Calvary, does not exhaust mercy for them, does not repay him, and certainly does not make him their debtor. In profound gratitude for his compassion, they must continue to avail themselves of his unwasting goodness and aid so that they may more and more grow into meek, consecrated, joyous servants, well knowing however that they must ever remain unmeriting, yea, unprofitable, servants.

God's religion to redeem fallen humanity begins, on the human level, with the universal failure and wreck of humanity. Any religion that does not begin here is not from God, and therefore has no power to save men from either past sins or from present and future sinning. Christianity goes to the seat of human malady, and, according to God's infinite love, knowledge, wisdom, grace and power is faultlessly adapted to reconcile estranged men to God, and to woo and to persuade them to take his full, super-human treatment for the cleansing, healing, and making them holy (whole) again. Is not a correct diagnosis necessary for the successful treatment of any disease? What other religion ever produced a Paul? The Hardening of Pharaoh In Romans 1:1-32, it is taught that God progressively gives men up to the hardening effect of sin as they progressively give him up for idolatry, thus punishing sin with more sin. Romans 9:17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, for this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth," focuses this divine method on Pharaoh, whom God made king of Egypt, sustained under the plagues, and abandoned to the hardening effect of his persistent, even with ever increasing, light, willing, rebellious sinning against God. God also dealt, centuries later, with the Jewish nation after this fashion: "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I will also choose their delusions...; because when I called, none did answer" (Isaiah 66:3-4). Nor has he changed his method in our Christian age: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie... who... had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

Because God always has just cause and adequate reason for everything he does, he never arbitrarily hardens any man. But by the ordinary, natural workings of his moral law in men who first harden themselves by defying him, lie, somewhat as civil law may further harden criminals, further hardens men who have already committed "a sin unto death," for which prayer avails not (1 John 5:16).

Exodus shows that Pharaoh first questioned God's authority, and that his heart was "stubborn;" then, the words, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," are used before it is said that "Jehovah hardened his heart." When such men as Pharaoh, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, et al, harden themselves, he, who "overrules men whom he cannot rule," weaves them, contrary to their purposes and consciousness, into his overall world government, and makes them, so to speak, passively glorify him. For this reason, God calls Nebuchadnezzar his "servant" (Jeremiah 25:9), and Cyrus his

"shepherd" (Isaiah 44:28). From such scriptures as 1 Samuel 4:8; 1 Samuel 6:6 (this last verse shows that the Philistines knew that Pharaoh hardened his own heart), and 1 Samuel 17:46, we learn that God's name was known in Canaan. And truly his name, where the Bible is known, is "published abroad in all the earth" today. God needed a Pharaoh to demonstrate his own character, and to warn the world of the demoralizing effect of sinning against light; and he knew where to find him. "The Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:32).

Pharaoh is a divinely forged key with which Paul unlocks God's character and the secrets of his government of the world; he is an immortal monument to the power and works of God. History is really made over the heads of human history makers—"the supernatural in the natural." Are not Caiaphas, Judas, and Pilate examples of God's using wicked men, even to give us our Savior? All this, and more, supports Paul's conclusion: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Human Accountability

Paul has just shown that God neither broke his word to Abraham, nor dealt arbitrarily with Pharaoh. This establishes God's prerogative of choice and his personal righteousness. Now he brings up the correlative, inevitable question of man's accountability. "Thou wilt say then to me, why doth he still find fault? For who withstandeth his will?" Paul, the only apostle academically equipped to discuss this highly abstruse, speculative, impracticable subject, absolutely declines all further discussion and uncompromisingly denounces the attitude of the questioner: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why didst thou make me thus?"

Considering what Paul has already said in Romans, I think, he is in effect saying: "Remember, man, who you are; you belong to a proscribed race of dead creatures who receive from Adam an infected moral nature that in time (age of accountability) invariably leads to actual, personal sins just as you receive from Adam an infected body that in time invariably leads to death; you are a sinner by both nature and practice, a creature "dead through your trespasses and sins," with no rights whatsoever before God, and should instead of "talking back" to him, be humbly, gratefully receiving any favor his mercy bestows."

Paul has learned the lesson God in kindness tried to teach the race symbolically by the tree of forbidden knowledge in Eden—the ineffable difference between Creator and creature. The lesson is exceedingly hard for both angels and men to learn. Overvaulting, creatural pride cost the former heavenly and the latter earthly paradise. "Secret (unrevealed) things belong to Jehovah" (Deuteronomy 29:29), and men who aspire to pry into them are drawing too nigh unto the burning bush (Exodus 3:5). Without a metaphysical discussion of the relationship between the divine and the human will, the Bible everywhere takes for granted that men, at least before they harden their hearts, are free to accept or reject God's mercy; and regardless of how they talk, men know they are free to choose. Had theologians never eaten of this forbidden tree, Christendom had been spared a needless, baffling, disastrous controversy.

Questions

Why is it imperatively important for men to know that Christianity begins, on the human level, with a morally bankrupt humanity?

Show from the Scriptures that it is the fixed policy of God to allow willful, rebellious men, who are determined to have their own way, to harden under the ordinary working of his righteous government.

Did this immutable method of divine dealing apply to Pharaoh?

Enlarge upon the statement that Pharaoh is a divinely forged key that unlocks God's personal character, and his principles of governing his world.

Explain: "History is really made over the heads of human history makers."

Why cannot God ever arbitrarily and indiscriminately deal with men?

Comment upon Paul's rebuke of men who try to pry further into God's business than he thinks expedient to reveal.

04.29. LESSON 29

LESSON 29

Paul bases the teaching in Romans 9:1-33 on these truths: (1) God never acts arbitrarily, (2) God never violates man's will, (3) and what God does is always morally right. He does not feel the need of asking (much less of proving) with Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Moreover, he has nothing but stern denunciation for those who quarrel with these truths. Instead of attempting to answer all questions and solve all problems pertaining to divine government, he unequivocally warns men, that on the human level, these truths must be the stopping place; because men have not the right or the knowledge or the goodness or the power to dig deeper and to judge God. To make Paul's figure of the potter mean that God makes men either good or bad against their will contradicts all that he, or any other inspired man ever wrote on the subject. The point Paul makes is that, as a potter in sovereign, but not capricious, power over clay selects and molds it into pottery which it is best fitted to make, so the sovereign, merciful God for good reasons of his own, inscrutable perhaps to men, selects and uses men, Abraham and Pharaoh for example, where they are best fitted to serve in his complicated, benevolent, over-all government of the world. His discussion does not delve deeper into the profound problem of temptation, sin, and suffering, which in turn involves the mighty mystery of man himself, since man is the only earthly creature that can sin. When a man says that, if he does not know God's reasons and understand his ways, he is not responsible, and fatalism follows, Paul brings him up short: "Stop, man, Stop! God is God! Is it necessary that you know? How dare you, a sinful, condemned creature, so irreverently and presumptuously mistrust your maker, and pry into his secrets?" Paul found great satisfaction and hope, no doubt, in leaving all the insoluble mysteries (humanly speaking) to him who made and runs the universe—to him who assumes all the responsibility unto all eternity. The Hardening of the Jews

Inasmuch as God's word and modal nature require that his wrath be revealed against all unrighteousness, unless Pharaoh be punished, his character will be compromised. And certainly Pharaoh cannot complain, if, while his life is running its inevitable course to destruction, God in long-suffering lets him live on and reign, and uses him as an unconscious instrument to publish his name abroad.

Paul now applies this method of divine government to the Jews, who, as Pharaoh hardened himself, have hardened themselves into "vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction." But immediately he announces the good news that God is delaying their destruction and making "known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, even unto us, whom he called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles." These "vessels of mercy" are the Christians, for they only have answered God's merciful call to come unto him for pardon and reconciliation. God prepared all this before he created the world. This is the first time in the chapter Paul has mentioned the Gentiles. At the time however, they composed by far the greater part of the church, and the masses of the Jews were its bitter enemies. He quotes from Hosea to show

that God foreknew the Gentiles would become his people; and from Isaiah to show that he also foreknew only a "remnant" of the Jews would be saved. Hence, God is not taken by surprise, for things are developing as he foreknew they would develop. Had the Jews not been blinded by prejudice and arrogance, this abuse of their prophets would have convinced them they were separating themselves from the covenant of the fathers, as Peter told them they were doing (Acts 3:1-26), were resisting the Holy Spirit, as Stephen told them they were doing (Acts 7:1-60), and were no longer God's people. As Jonah, a bigoted Jew, thought God wronged him when he spared heathen Nineveh, so a nation of bigoted Jews, who have overwhelming evidence denied Jonah, think God wrongs them when he saves heathen Rome. They forget it is always the pure mercy and goodness of God that saves any man—that leaves them a "seed," which saves them from the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah. Penitent, pious, holy men never accuse God, but ever themselves, of wrongdoing.

Willing and Running in Vain

Paul has spent Romans 9:1-33 establishing God's sovereign rights and moral integrity. God's selection or rejection, and corresponding use, of individuals and nations are not even to be questioned, but taken on absolute faith and trust.

Now at the end of the chapter, he begins the delicate task of showing the Jews that they are responsible for their exclusion from the Mosaic covenant. In stubborn self-will they yet refuse to see that covenant as a provisional, carnal covenant designed by God to prepare them for his succeeding, spiritual covenant. They are so enamored of the types, stately ritual, and Jewish advantages of Judaism that they think nothing can be better, and obstinately refuse to go on with God in his invincible progress into universal Christianity. With fanatical zeal they cling to the man-centered first covenant in preference to the God-centered second covenant. Since they refuse to make this shift in center, which is the very essence of the distinction of superiority of Christianity over Judaism, what can God do but brush them aside and select others who will trust and cooperate with him? "Wherefore? because they sought it (righteousness) not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling (Christ)." They strangely persist in willing and running in vain, whereas they might, by God's mercy, will to run successfully on his race track. As Paul knows only too well how this truth enrages the Jews against him, he, in his burning, Christ-like love for them, is tender and soothing. Hoping to prepare them for an honest, healing study of their misdirected zeal, he assures them that the desire of his heart and his prayer to God is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1). As Christ wept over, prayed for, but preached against the Jews, so Paul weeps over, prays for, but preaches against them. He faithfully and firmly tells them that their zeal in seeking spiritual life by means of law-keeping is an ignorant zeal that may be for God, but is not of God; and that it can do nothing but minister to their fleshly pride. He tells them that Christ is the end of the covenant of law, both temporally and religiously (Romans 10:4), and that only by faith in him can they ever will and run in step with God, and go on with God unto everlasting life.

Questions

Why does Paul take the deepest and most vital things in God's personal character and his government, ultimately, for granted?

Show that the true interpretation of the figure of the potter both leaves men free in the crucial human choice, and preserves God's integrity.

What is Paul's answer to the shallow fatalist?

Show that God used the same principles of government in dealing with the Jews that he used in dealing with Pharaoh.

For what specific purpose does Paul use Hosea and Isaiah, respectively, in his portrayal of God's moral character and government?

What shift in center, a shift that is the essence of transition from Judaism (or any other religion) to Christianity, did the Jews refuse to make?

Comment upon the blending of faithfulness, tenderness, courage, firmness, and skill in Paul's reasoning with the recalcitrant Jews.

04.30. LESSON 30

LESSON 30

Paul's discussion of divine sovereignty and human accountability in Romans contains no suggestion whatsoever of incompatibility between the doctrines. Neither in Peter's indictment of the Jews on Pentecost, "Him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay," which focuses the two truths more sharply than Paul's discussion does, is there so much as a hint of discord between the doctrines.

All questions that may arise from the fact that God's foreknowing and predestining Christ's death did not affect the responsibility and accountability of the men who crucified him are "foolish and ignorant questionings," which Paul told Timothy and Titus to shun and refuse. If Peter and Paul even thought of this matter at all, they stayed not to meddle with it, but leaving it to God whose business it was and who alone was competent to deal with it, they hastened on, humbled and sobered by the dread truths involved, as faithful stewards in tremendous earnestness with their own commissioned business of preaching the universal gospel of reconciliation, hoping to humble the perishing rebels of earth into surrender and repentance to the merciful, sovereign Maker and Owner.

Two Kinds of Righteousness

How is it that such perverted, depraved Gentiles as those described in Romans 1 "attain to righteousness," while Jews, who zealously, laboriously, and sincerely observe religious rites, elaborate rituals, and burdensome traditions, fail to attain it? The Gentiles, who had no self-righteousness to hinder them, freely and gladly entered in through the "door of faith" (Acts 13:48; Acts 14:27) into Christ, thrown wide open to them by God's mercy, as their only hope. Thus they obtained the righteousness, which is the free and gracious gift of God to believers. The reason Israel failed to arrive at this faith-righteousness was that they were seeking a law-righteousness of their own "by works of law"—counterfeit righteousness camouflaged as the righteousness from God. Paul gives them full credit for their zeal, but tells them it is "not according to knowledge," and that it is no ground for salvation. This is the key to the whole chapter, the purpose of which is to show the Jews why they are set aside. Paul's own life is the best commentary on the appalling truth that sincere, zealous men may be lost.

Paul in relating his religious experience contrasts these two kinds of righteousness: "Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, even the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Php 3:9). These two kinds of righteousness cannot coexist, because one must be dead to the former in order to be alive to the latter: "For I... died unto the law that I might live unto God" (Galatians 2:19); "For if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily, righteousness would have been of the law" (Galatians 3:21). Law cannot give pardon and life and hope and love and security. Since Pentecost, Jews must be as completely done with Mosaic law, both as a means of obtaining life and as a rule for living life, as if

it had never been given; or as dead to it as are Gentiles, who have never been under it.

Israel is a tragic example of religious men of legal mind clinging, blindly and doggedly, to traditions and symbols instead of growing into the truth and the life symbolized by and embodied in the types and emblems. Nothing more surely than the leaven of legalism paralyzes the finer instincts and most godlike facilities of the soul. Jesus warned his disciples against it (Luke 12:1). Remember, it was Jewish legalists who forced the Pagan Romans contrary to their feelings and will to crucify Jesus. Had Jesus but said, "Woe unto you Romans," instead of: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," what a difference it would have made. Remember, Paul, probably in mental gifts and nobility of soul the greatest of all Jews, was first "A Pharisee... as touching the law, found blameless." But he was withal, because of his inhuman, bloody persecution of holy, helpless saints, the chief of sinners. But this was the best the principle of legality could do for him! Need Christians today be told that they may eat the Lord's Supper, and in every way live respectable, nominal Christian lives in this cold, formal, traditional, legalistic, partisan, loveless, flesh-centered, spirit-killing manner?

"All Things Are Now Ready" (Christ) In Romans 10:5-21, Paul, continuing his contrast of law-righteousness and faith-righteousness, shows that the free and universal nature of Christianity is set forth plainly in the Old Testament. "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. But the righteousness which is by faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down;) or, who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word we preach."

First, Paul here makes a free quotation from Moses (Leviticus 18:5) to the effect that the life of men living under law depends on their perfect obedience of law. Second, he incorporates, with Christian meaning, the strong, lively words of Moses with reference to the law (Deuteronomy 30:11-14) into his exposition of Christianity. What could so well show his skill and power in reasoning with Jews as this personifying the gospel and having it say what Moses said of the law? His purpose is to convince Jews that Christianity is a fulfillment of Moses, and that following Moses through will make Christians of them; that instead of doing meritorious deeds they have only to believe in the divinely wrought, past Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus, the benefits of which are as free as the air they breathe, and to realize that with respect to righteousness, the gospel says, not "do," but "done." He is begging them to lay their "deadly doing down," to empty their hands that they may grasp what only empty hands may grasp, and to see that they cannot drag themselves up the lofty peak of righteousness by natural human strength.

Finally, Paul quotes Isaiah and Joel to show that the gospel is, not only free, but also universal—"Whosoever shall call..." Then, he quotes Isaiah and David to show that this free, universal gospel has had divine universal proclamation. Thus, Paul vindicates his mission to the Gentiles, the very thing that the Jews say makes him their enemy. Last of all, he has Moses and Isaiah testifying that the acceptance of the Gentiles was made known from of old.

Questions

Why do Paul, Peter, and all other Biblical writers ignore the incompatibility that men may find between God's sovereignty and man's accountability?

Differentiate between "a righteousness... which is of the law" and "the righteousness which is from God by faith."

Why did Gentiles find faith-righteousness, while the Jews found it not?

Account for the fact that Paul before he accepted Christ was, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless," and yet he was chief of sinners.

Why should Paul's point that, if they would but follow Moses through, they would become Christians, have appealed to Jews especially?

Explain the statement that with respect to justification, the gospel says, not "do," but "done."

How does Paul vindicate his apostleship to the Gentiles, which is the main offense the Jews have against him?

04.31. LESSON 31

LESSON 31

"The Spirit of truth," through Paul, weaves into Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36 about thirty quotations from the Old Testament. Some of these, such as Paul's applying to the gospel, with fuller, deeper, more spiritual meaning, language that Moses applied to the law, are free, allusive quotations. This manner of quoting throws light upon the Christian use of the Old Testament, and upon the unity, and consistency of the Bible as a whole. This may be called interpreting the Old Testament in the spirit of the New. Such use of the language of others is a common practice of both inspired and uninspired men. For instance, to how many things besides marriage has Christ's saying about marriage, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," been applied? A living, increasing, unifying purpose runs through the Bible—"The word of God is living and active," and "shall not pass away." With the fuller, final revelation of the New Testament on such subjects as God's kingdom, Christ's nature and character, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God's care for his children, the resurrection, immortality, and eternal life, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, and indeed all the books of the Old Testament mean more to us than they could possibly mean to their first readers. Certainly, God's personal character, his government, and his word since Revelation was written are changeless, but when a Christian's knowledge of God and the Bible becomes changeless, his life is impoverished. The reading of Christians may be so fragmentary, disjointed, and textual that they cannot grow in knowledge as they should. The failure to include in their methods of studying the Bible this general, synthetic method accounts for much of their partial, superficial understanding of God's invincible, overall, eternal purpose.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Belief of the heart guards against hypocrisy, and confession with the mouth against cowardice. How simple, easy to come by, and efficient Christianity really is. Every seeking sinner finds a seeking Savior coming to meet him; no advantage of fleshly privilege is needed to reach spiritual blessing in Christ; Christians ascend the heights because Christ descended into the depths. Free and Universal! Ask and have—what more could one wish? If the Jews were destined by God to eternal damnation, how much short of blasphemy is the language of Isaiah and Paul, "All day long I (God) spread out my hands (beseeching them to be reconciled unto him) unto a disobedient and gainsaying people?" One wonders whether God's long-continued patience and goodness to "vessels fitted unto destruction," or the Jews' long-continued hardness, willful ignorance, and complaining, stubborn, rebellious spirit is the greater wonder.

Rejection of Israel Not Total

(Romans 11:1-10) As God's forbearance with Pharaoh was finally exhausted this longsuffering with the Jews was fast running out when Romans was written. About thirteen years later (AD 70) God used Rome to destroy Israel in what has been called the most complete military execution of any nation in history.

Although this impending doom, and subsequent eternal woe, as well it may, grieves Paul, himself an Israelite, beyond words and tears, he is not hopeless as Elijah was when he faithlessly wailed that he, the only faithful man left alive, was being persecuted unto death. Paul knows that as there were seven thousand who did not bow the knee to Baal in Elijah's day, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant (including himself) according to the election of grace." Thus, Paul finds comfort and hope in the fact that God is not compelled to cast off all "His people which he foreknew" in a special way.

"But if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Paul nowhere states more incisively and incisively and categorically than in this verse the utter incompatibility of grace and works. He knows by both subjective and objective experience the seductive, powerful, and tenacious nature of the faith in human sufficiency and merit. Such faith energized him when he persecuted the church, and it later energized the Jews when they persecuted him as a Christian. Even many Jews who came into the church, not really converted from flesh to spirit, and consequently having little conception of the newness, liberty, and largeness of Christianity, were his aggressive enemies. This crafty, Judaic party in the church (Galatians 2:3-5), by destroying its freedom and universality, perverted and shriveled it (Galatians 1:7) into another Jewish sect. Paul's knowing how very hard it is for men to believe that works and grace are mutually contradictory and destructive must account for his often repeated, emphatic teaching on the subject in so many of his letters. Anyway, he teaches that men who trust grace are the elect, and that men who trust their own works are the non-elect—that any election must be an "election of grace;" teaches that men are free and may will to have God's grace to work Christian works in and through them (Ephesians 2:4-10). This section closes with more quotations from Isaiah and David re-emphasizing the fact that the Jews so hardened themselves against God that God had to harden them, even unto allowing their religion to become a burden and a curse to them. Truly, a most solemn warning to all worshippers of all races!

Rejection of Israel Not Final

(Romans 11:11-32)

Romans 11:11-15 of this section prepare for the rest of the passage. "I say then, did they stumble that they might fall (beyond recovery)? God forbid: but by their fall (a second Greek word for "fall," meaning "falling aside") salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy... For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"

Paul here declares that the rejection of Christ by the Jews was the occasion of the reception of Christ by the Gentiles—that Jewish unbelief was Gentile opportunity. He rejoices that his success among the Gentiles reacts favorably upon some of his beloved kinsmen after the flesh, and moves them to become Christians. But Paul, being too familiar with the whole fabric of traditional Hebrew culture with its entrenched, obstinate bigotry to be blindly optimistic, speaks of this saving only "some of them." His two rhetorical questions emphasize the idea that, if Israel's falling aside works such benefits, Israel's restoration should mean a mighty spiritual revival.

Questions

What does "interpreting the Old Testament in the spirit of the New Testament "mean?"

Give the meaning of, "studying the Bible in a general, synthetic way," and tell some of the advantages of so studying it.

How does belief in the heart guard against hypocrisy and confession with the mouth against cowardice?

Why did not Paul become despondent over the condition of Israel, as Elijah centuries before had done?

Put into words of your own the meaning of Paul's, "But if it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace."

Why must any election that God ever makes be of grace?

Does Paul teach in Romans 11:1-36 that Jewish unbelief was Gentile opportunity?

04.32. LESSON 32

LESSON 32

Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36 has been called the noblest theological argument ever written. The ninth chapter portrays God as the absolutely independent Ruler of mankind, exercising his sovereign right to use, or set aside, individuals and nations according to their fitness to serve his ends and further his program. God, and only God, is God. Men must know they are creatures, and act as creatures.

Romans 10:1-21 shows that God never abuses his prerogatives, but that he always makes legitimate use of his almighty power and limitless resources; that instead of his dealings with his subjects being arbitrary and corrupt, as the dealings of men lifted up in power almost invariably are, all his decisions and works rest on a foundation of justice, righteousness and loving kindness.

Romans 11:1-36 witnesses to the utility of the judgments, measures, and methods God uses in presiding over the progress of the Abrahamic covenant. It reveals his consummate administrative wisdom and skill in adapting means to ends, in balancing one thing against another, and in turning loss into gain, as he irresistibly advances according to schedule in fulfilling his promise to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Under his infinitely wise, able, and good management, everything is grist to his mill. The Abrahamic Covenant As An Olive Tree The promise of a Savior is coeval with human sin. This promise makes known that the Savior was to be a human being—the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). After many centuries, God chose "Abram the Hebrew" (Genesis 14:13) to be the father of "a great nation" which would produce this Seed of the woman, without a human father. Hence, the Savior was to be not only a man, but a man of the Hebrew race. This divine choice constituted Abraham a man set apart and made holy for this special purpose. "Hebrews," "Israelites," and "Jews" are three scriptural names for Abraham's descendants, or branches. Paul's statement, "If the root is holy, so also are the branches" means, I think, that Abraham as the "root" and his posterity as the "branches" are the holy, dedicated race for God's bringing Christ into the world. "Salvation is from the Jews" (Christ—John 4:22).

God added his limited provisional Mosaic covenant of law to his earlier universal, permanent Abrahamic covenant of grace, not however to annul the older covenant, but to let men learn by experience that, inasmuch as they could never earn justification by perfect obedience of law, they must accept it as a free gift of God's grace. When this temporary, parenthetic covenant of law had served its purpose as a tutor to bring men to Christ, as their only hope of justification, "God took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Galatians 3:15-19; Colossians 2:14). But since the Jews refused to give up their national covenant, and hardened themselves and rebelled against God, as Pharaoh did, they forced God to set them aside, and go with his fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant without them. This is the gospel Peter preached on Pentecost so effectively that he persuaded a remnant of about 3,000 Jews of the "crooked generation" that crucified Jesus to go on with God in order to escape being left behind. In his next sermon, Peter, after telling the Jews that Moses and

all the prophets from Samuel onward had foretold the Christianity he was preaching, continued: "Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). As a result of this sermon, the Christian remnant that elected to remain in the Abrahamic covenant of grace increased to "about five thousand." To Gentile Christians Paul writes: "But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree; glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee." As Peter was the chosen apostle to persuade Jews not to fall out of God's advancing program, he was likewise the chosen man to make the first graft (Cornelius—Acts 10) from the Gentile wild olive into the Abrahamic stock, so that all men might be "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Gentile Pride

Paul to Gentiles again: "Thou wilt say then, branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Note that Paul makes human cooperation absolutely indispensable—God's goodness unmixed with man's faith and obedience simply will not work in religion (Hebrews 4:2). As unbelief was the cause of Jewish branches being broken off, so must unbelief cause Gentile branches also to be broken off. Furthermore, since Gentiles have much more faith-creating evidence than ancient Jews had, their unbelief is much more blamable. Human reason, pride, and prejudice must bow before faith. The Holy Spirit knowing the deceitfulness and corruption of the human heart, warns Gentile Christians lest they repeat the fatal pride and presumption of the broken-off Jewish branches. Does not remembering that this warning was sent directly to Rome, the very city in which Gentile pride and presumption as they grew into the powerful, arrogant hierarchy of Roman Catholicism was to reign over Christendom many centuries (and the end is not yet) emphasizes its divine foresight and providence, and put Gentile Christians on their guard against an insidious, perpetual, deadly peril until their fullness be come in.

Why should Gentile Christians be high-minded and glory over Jewish Christians? Paul reminds them to be a graft is nothing of which to be proud. Since the whole church springs from a Jewish root, Jewish and Gentile Christians, sharing Christ's eternal life in common, are organically one. Christ "Abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commands contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross... and preached peace to you (Gentiles) that were far off, and peace to them (Jews) that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:15-18).

Questions

State the gist of each chapter in Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36.

On what basis did God select and dedicate a family for Christ's human ancestry?

How is it that the Mosaic covenant is a parenthesis?

What was Peter's understanding of the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant?

Show that Paul under the figure of an olive tree corroborates Peter's view.

Against what egregious mistake of the Jews did Paul warn the Gentiles?

How does this prophetic warning confirm the inspiration of the Scriptures?

04.33. LESSON 33

LESSON 33

Over against the warning to Gentiles, "Be not high-minded, but fear" lest you fall also, Paul sets the hope of Jewish restoration—fear for Gentiles and hope for Jews. Having already shown that the recovery of Israel is desirable (Romans 11:12-15) and scriptural (Romans 11:16), he now shows that it harmonizes with nature: "And they also, if they continue not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again... into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:23-24). In this Scripture, Paul, illustrating by a general use of the principle of grafting, teaches that, since the immutable covenant was made primarily with Israel, it is more natural and reasonable that Israel be restored to it than that pagan Gentiles be brought into it. He is asking why, inasmuch as Gentiles from Cornelius onward have "contrary to nature" been grafted into the Jewish olive tree, should grafting Jews hack into it be thought unnatural and improbable.

Paul As Prophet

After arguing that the restoration of Israel is desirable, scriptural, and natural, Paul is ready to prophesy that God's keeping his promise to Abraham involves as a coming event the recovery of Israel: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion a Deliverer... and this is my covenant unto them... for the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of" (Romans 11:25-29). Surely, this prophecy means that now, while Israel is broken off, God's field of operation is in particular with Gentiles until his work among them is done; at which time the generation of Jews then living will be ready to choose the Christ, whom their ancestors crucified, as their Lord and God (cp. Luke 21:24). The adverb "so" compactly condenses the quotation as the manner of Israel's restoration. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken" (Christ). That the history of Christendom since Paul's prophecy was made vindicates him as a true prophet of God should lead us to expect the fulfillment of the rest of his prophecy. Time works no change in God. But has Paul's warning that Gentiles be not conceited and high-minded, but fear, been heeded? How much truer to God in Christ have they been than Jews were true to God in Moses? Do not many think that the present Christian age can never be superseded by a more mature age, much as the Jews refused, despite the utmost efforts of Christ and Paul to convince them of their deadly error, to go on with God into Christianity, because they blindly thought the Mosaic age was God's best and final economy? As Jews were anciently and still are in their new Palestinian state, may not Gentiles now be "Found even to be fighting against God?" Is not the present Gentile age, as the Jewish age before it ended, to end in partial failure (Luke 17:22-27), but not until Israel is ready by choice to come back into God's program of mercy? The Holy Spirit gives in Romans but a very general outline of God's manner of working out the Abrahamic covenant. Details found elsewhere in the Bible, of course when we understand them, fit perfectly into this basic outline. In our study of this complicated subject further than an exposition

of Romans requires, we must remember that, while God never works above or beyond Christ, he may work in and through Christ now and "in the ages to come" (Ephesians 2:7) very much that far transcends our present knowledge and even "All that we ask or think."

Differing views about the future which do not directly effect primary, essential things, such as Christ's lordship and the worship and work of the church, may not involve matters irreconcilable to Christian doctrine, and hence need not disrupt Christian fellowship. Of course, to mark and turn away from any one who teaches anything "contrary to the doctrine" (Romans 16:17), is a plain duty. But to mismanage differences about secondary, non-essential things in such a loveless, un-Christian manner as to disrupt fellowship is very definitely contrary to the whole doctrine and spirit of Christianity. Let us, brethren, in brotherly kindness, love, unbiased study of God's work, and friendly exchange of ideas, re-examine our differences about things that are not of vital importance to the life and work of the church. We, then, "Speaking truth in love may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

Paul's Worshipful Doxology

(Romans 11:33-36) From the summit of the lofty range of divine revelation to which he has been climbing in Romans, Paul writes: "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience that he might show mercy unto all" (Romans 11:32). This verse is the conclusion to both Paul's exposition of the philosophy of Christianity (Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36) and to his setting forth Israel's place in human history (Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36). This historic division of Romans begins with Paul's profound sorrow over Israel's temporarily losing her place in God's perpetually unfolding plan for the ages and ends with his sublime panegyric upon God who makes possible the hope of her restoration. It seems that men who feel deepest also think highest. This doxology is both retrospective and prospective. When Paul views the past, he sees Jews and Gentiles alike condemned; when he turns to the future, he sees God's mercy poured out on both alike. God's mercy given gratis to men who have no merit in the grand climax of Romans. Upon contemplating God's unified policy, which admits no piece work, of making the wrath of both Jew and Gentile praise him by having them alternatively aid each other until they come to see that they have only common interests and become one in Christ; at last Jews, with zeal according to knowledge, and Gentiles knit together, by faith, forever in the Abrahamic covenant that all the earth may be blessed, Paul's joy knows no bounds, and this ecstatic laudation of God, whose character is the basis of all profound reverence and devout worship, praising his sole proprietorship, inscrutable wisdom, invisible might and infinite goodness, leaps from his pen. Can the heart of any man who considers God's strategy of letting the black plague of sin work its horrors until mankind in desperation comes to him for cure, fail to beat in sympathy with this beatific vision? Surely, Christian men who love both God and men can, with Paul, wonder, worship, work, and wait for God to finish his glorious work of redemption. May I pray you, my dear brethren, to study Romans reverently, take it at face value, and grant others the same Christian freedom.

Questions

What is Paul's fear for the Gentiles, and his hope for the Jews?

Does Paul think that the restoration of the Jews to the Abrahamic covenant is desirable, possible, and scriptural?

What is the logical import of the adverb "so" in his argument?

What similarity exists between the end of the antediluvian age and the coming end of the present Christian dispensation?

Does Paul think it is contrary to, or a fulfillment of, God's revealed will to believe that a great many of a generation of Jews will yet "be grafted into their own olive tree"?

What is the scriptural procedure for brethren in Christ who differ about secondary things, that are not plainly contrary to Christian doctrine?

Discuss the prime cause, the comprehensiveness of the subject matter, and the energizing hope of the Doxology with which Paul closes Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36.

04.34. LESSON 34

LESSON 34 The conclusion to the doctrine of Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, namely that condemned humanity—all men patients in one hospital stricken with the same deadly malady—may be justified, is found in Romans 5:1 : "Being therefore justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The conclusion to the doctrine of Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, namely, that justified reconciled men are enabled to be holy, saintly men, "conformed to the image" of God's Son, is found in Romans 8:1 : "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Another "therefore," summing up the doctrinal part (Romans 1:1-32, Romans 2:1-29, Romans 3:1-31, Romans 4:1-25, Romans 5:1-21, Romans 6:1-23, Romans 7:1-25, Romans 8:1-39, Romans 9:1-33, Romans 10:1-21, Romans 11:1-36) and introducing the hortatory part (Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-33, Romans 16:1-27) of Romans, is found in Romans 12:1 : "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice... to God." Romans crystallizes into these great logical "therefore's"—the "therefore" of Justification and of Sanctification and of Consecration.

Romans 12:1-2 That the hortatory part of Romans, pertaining to the various relationships of Christians to church, state, and society in general, is linked to the doctrinal part by "therefore" proves that practical religion depends upon doctrinal religion—doctrine is the oil in the lamp, exhortation is lighting the wick, and the Christian character is the burning lamp. Doctrine is related to practice, to use another figure, as root to fruit. To think that doctrine within itself is sufficient is as an orchardist who cares for only the roots of his trees. On the other hand to think that the Christian life is possible without Christian doctrine is as foolish as to expect grapes without the vine. God does not ask men to climb the lofty peaks of love and self-renunciation found in Romans 12:1-21 and in the Sermon on the Mount until they know the doctrine of his mercies toward them in their desperate need; he knows such living is impossible to fallen men, unaided. Verily, it takes the coalescing of doctrine and practice to make Christianity, which rests solidly upon the goodness of God.

These verses also make it plain that the way Christian doctrine grows into Christian behavior is by making the mind Christian: "And be not fashioned after this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." This begins not by putting a new coat on the old man, but by making a new man, renewed down to the very roots of his nature. Even the necessary old activities he brings over into his new life are new in motive and purpose. A Christian's being regenerated in mind within makes it, since the body is the agent of the mind, reasonable and spiritual for him, as a flower grows from within to without, to present his body without to God. Because the true test of whether we actually give ourselves to God when we think we do is the use we make of our bodies, Paul beseeches us to present our bodies to God, not our souls. The body is the ultimate in sacrifice. Christ used his body as his bridge across to men, and he uses our bodies now as his bridge across to men.

Man is a being consisting of three essential parts, "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23), which, but for sin, would never have been separated. When his redemption from the ruin of sin is complete at his resurrection, he will again be a triune being. The body is so dear to God that he permits the devil to have the body of Moses (Jude 1:9), or of any other servant of his, only temporarily. The gospel is good news for the body as well as for the soul and spirit, both before and after death. Christianity is the only religion that gives the body its proper dignity and honor. "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ?... Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which we have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). The man who takes up Paul's challenge to be moved "by the mercies of God, to present" his body, through the means of his regenerated mind, as a living sacrifice to God finds that the plan does what it proposes to do. As he might find, not by human philosophy and logic, but by sowing an unfamiliar seed, that it produces a choice, new flower, so he finds that God's will to save him by grace through faith, inasmuch as he progressively becomes wiser, better, and happier, with sins of mind and bad habits of body conquered, is not only a "good and acceptable and perfect" way, but that it gets better and more satisfying all the time.

Moreover, a Christian is rewarded by being so transformed in nature that he is able to discern God's plan for his life. As he obeys and prays for guidance, he will in the perplexities of life be guided by means of his regenerated mind around pitfalls into good things. Let him in good faith accept Christ's invitation, "Come unto me... and ye shall find rest," and he will find that in the measure he trusts Christ, he believes God is directing his way through life. Every earnest man owes it to himself to put Christianity to the proof of life that he may find out for himself it is not merely a doctrine to discuss, but a reality to be known only by personal experience. "Prove me... saith Jehovah... if I will not open you the windows of heaven" (Malachi 3:10). A final thought on these two verses: after naming "the mercies of God" as the mighty driveshaft upon which Christianity depends for its operating power, they on the human level, give the fundamental principles of Christian consecration. The remainder of Romans is but their prolonged echo.

Romans 12:3-8

"For I say through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly." This warning has reference especially to the miraculous gifts of the day, but it is not limited to them. That Christians should soberly estimate their ability and not attempt things beyond their capacity is still as true as it ever was. In miraculous gifts, I think, God supplemented the gifts he had already given by natural means. He is too wise an economist to discard natural gifts, for they blend with supernatural gifts. Would not God in giving miraculous wisdom select as recipient a man of naturally clear thought? Or in giving supernatural hortatory power a man of naturally warm, fervid feelings? Would he to get a better exhorter in song select a man without ear and voice for music? After men could use the complete Bible, probably miraculous gifts would not improve their teaching, exhorting, and singing.

Questions

Comment upon the logical and doctrinal import of the three "therefore's" into which Romans crystallizes.

What relationship exists between God's mercies and Christian living?

What relationship exists between doctrine, exhortation, and practice?

Why does Paul beseech Christians to give, rather than their spirits, their bodies to God?

How can Christians learn that God's will for them is "good and acceptable and perfect"?

How can Christians be assured that amid the problems and perplexities of life God is leading and keeping them?

Comment upon the blending of miraculous with natural gifts.

04.35. LESSON 35

LESSON 35

"As we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and several members one of another" (Romans 12:4-5). The Holy Spirit, because we are all branches of one Vine, Christ, who shares his life with us, thus constituting Christian unity, in these verses stresses our mutual interrelationship and interdependence. To make these spiritual relationships more realistic and practical, Paul repeatedly uses the analogy of the human body (1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:1-32; Colossians 1:1-29) with all of its amazing perfection, without deficiency or redundancy, of unity in the midst of diversity. As in the body there are no gift-less, useless members, and as each member has its own particular gift, so is Christ; as in the functioning of the body as a unit each member does its own work, and supplements all other members, so is the church. Thus Christians are, so to speak, organs of one another. For example, if I cannot lead singing in the assembly, my brother who can is my organ of song, whom I must love and help, not envy and disparage. I have grace, faith, and gift to fill only my own office, and can never work in the measure of another's faith, gift, and aptitude—each key fits its own lock. Paul teaches in the context of, "But now are there many members, but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20), that unity in diversity is equally essential in the body and in the church—both are so constituted. Herein lies the possibility of mutual edification, as in music, "Distinct melodies breathed by different voices constitute full harmony." But nothing can be more deadly to divine Christian unity than the substitute, synthetic, uniformity, built upon human authority, written or oral, and social bias and pressure. Not until we think "soberly" of our talents—neither flaunt nor bury them—and possess the cardinal Christian virtue, humility, can our self-sufficient, egotism ("mistaken nonentity") and envy break down and make possible the presenting of our bodies to God. Only when we do this, however, the ambitions and lusts of the flesh may be superseded by nine-fold fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Romans 12:9-21 As a spontaneous sketch of the fairest graces of personal behavior toward others, growing out of the master principles of Christian love, this Scripture is unrivaled. It comprises a cluster of some two dozen specific exhortations, running counter to the instincts of human nature, to act in nobly unselfish love "Toward all men, especially toward them that are of the household of the faith." The Greeks wrote of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, but of nothing similar to the Christian traits of lowliness, tenderness, sympathy, kindness, forgiveness, peaceableness, and general largeness of soul that pervade these verses. Our difficulty lies not in understanding, but in obeying, the requirements of this passage. A basic mistake, I think, is we expect the flesh by the process of education to evolve into Christianity, whereas Paul says, "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh" (Galatians 5:24). In writing this compendium of Christian virtues, Paul assumes that his readers "have no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3), for he has already taught them: "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not... The mind of the flesh is enmity against God... they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 12:7-8). "Fleshly Christian" is a contradiction of terms. The

unwillingness of the flesh to die has ever been the tragedy of the church.

Digging down to the deepest roots of Christianity on the human side, Christ gave Nicodemus to understand that his flesh was so polluted that it would have to be discarded, and a new start, involving such a radical change in him that he called it being "born anew" (John 3:1-36), must be made. Paul says the man who has been so born is "a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17), and that his former life is "but refuse" (Php 3:8). If Nicodemus ever was born again, he became one of the "babes in Christ" and possessed for the first time spiritual life which is imparted by God in this spiritual birth. Only then, could he judge the values of life as God judges them, and live a spiritual life. Could he have attained this new order of life by developing his flesh, "Then Christ died for naught" (Galatians 2:21).

Love in Action The world is built upon a cross. "The love at the heart of the universe is a stern, splendid thing, deep and tragic." Without stern aspects nothing nobler than facile good nature and unrighteous indifference to sin is possible. In both God and man, love embodies wrath—the two constituting holiness. Love may have to be "grievous" in order to yield "peaceable fruit" afterward. Only the love that is strong enough to abhor evil can cleave to the good. Honest love hates the evil even in friends, and loves the good even in enemies—"rejoiceth with the truth." When both truth and peace cannot be kept, let peace go.

Only lowly Christian love is capable of honoring others before self. In times of suffering and trouble, patience with her "perfect work," hope that "putteth not to shame," and love that "never faileth" unite to compound the best soul tonic. "Little minds are too much hurt by little things." An unknown brother's trouble is a letter of introduction to his brethren. Prayer is such a simple thing that a child can pray, and yet it involves such profundity and mystery that mature saints thank God for the privilege and boon of prayer without understanding philosophy of prayer. Love enters into the joys and sorrows of others. It is easy to weep with the weeping, but it takes a heavenly spirit and a large, rich nature to rejoice with those in success and happiness. What is more moving than the tears of a strong man? "A good man weeps easily, the better, the easier." One who is not very kind is not very spiritual.

Christians having equal minds toward all, keeping in harmony with one another, affecting not high things but living in sympathy with the lowly (many early Christians were slaves), and practicing scrupulous honesty are the best examples of the fine art of living together, and prove that of all institutions on earth "The church is the noblest school of courtesy." Only the church knows the full meaning of love, fraternity, equality, freedom, and peace. Were Christians only Christian, unloving, over-bearing self-confidence and self-assertion, the thing against which this chapter forewarns, could never be among brethren.

Questions

Describe Christian interrelationship and interdependence, tell what gives them existence and strength, and by what analogy Paul illustrates them.

As applied to Christians at worship or work what does "Every key fits only its own lock" mean?

Explain what "unity in the midst of diversity" means in the church, and tell its advantages.

What is the difference in source between pagan and Christian virtues?

What is the basic cause of discord and division among brethren?

What does "The church is the noblest school of courtesy" mean?

Why is the phrase, "fleshly Christian," a contradiction of terms?

04.36. LESSON 36

LESSON 36

Romans 12:1-21 closes with exhortations concerning the treatment of enemies. When Christians live their religion, neither enmity among themselves nor peace with the world is possible, for "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). The world demands conformity: it punishes those who fall below and persecutes those who rise above its standards. The only way for Christians to avoid the enmity of the world, that crucified their Lord and have never repented of the crime, is to become worldly themselves. "If the world hate you, ye know it hated me before it hated you... I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18-19). The world hated Christ because his word and life condemned its evil works (John 3:19-21), and the word and life of his disciples likewise arouse the hatred of the world, for they also must condemn its humanism, sensuality, pride, greed, envy, and lust for power.

"Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord." Peter says that Christ's own life is an example of this way of living: "Christ suffered also for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps... who, when he was reviled, revileth not again... but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21-23). Peter and Paul exhort us to follow Christ, who always obeyed God and left his enemies, absolutely, for God to recompense. That evildoers be recompensed is morally right and necessary, but God does not permit Christians to usurp his prerogative of administering vengeance.

If we try to mete punishment to our enemies, by reason of our sin-warped, passion beclouded thinking, partial knowledge, and incapacity to know hearts, we are unable to do it right. Probably another reason we are not to avenge ourselves is that the very effort would further demoralize and harden us. On the human level, evil is not the answer to evil; rather, evil breeds evil. We should be happy to leave it to him who can judge "righteously" for all concerned. The only way to be rid of enemies is to melt their hostility with kindness. The logic of kindness is stronger than the logic of argument, or of force—men cannot be coerced into love. When I retaliate and become the enemy of my enemy, God's wrath rests upon us both. Instead of being overcome by evil, we must be conquerors, overcoming evil with good—this is Christian vengeance and victory.

God's Two Governments In Romans 12:1-21, Paul exhorts Christians in God's spiritual kingdom, the church, to overcome evil with good, to do all they do in love, and to let God avenge their wrongs. Continuing the subject of vengeance in Romans 13:1-14, he reveals that God ordains civil government, the state, "As an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." The church and the state are both, therefore, divine institutions, but God uses them in different ways for different ends. The church evangelizes and in grace pardons; the state arrests and in justice punishes. In the church, Christians are active leaders; in the state, Christians are but passive subjects. A thumbing through the Bible shows why these two governments are needed. God originally governed man through immediate, personal, spiritual communion with him. This perfect government soon began to work

imperfectly, however, because man's sin separated him from God. This form of government, nevertheless, continued until God's holiness could no longer endure man's unholiness, and he destroyed all men except Noah and his family. God would not permit men to avenge Abel's murder (Genesis 4:15), and he used no human agency in the Noachian flood.

One change God made in the government of the new world after the Flood was to give men the authority to execute murderers: "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Genesis 9:6). God was not abdicating to let men take over government, but merely letting them, as his representatives, exercise some authority which heretofore he had kept to himself personally. But Nimrod, the beginning of whose kingdom was Babel (Genesis 10:10), and many others broke away from God and established their own kingdoms. The first centralization of power, consolidation of humanity in rebellion to God, and dream of godless world empire was the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-32). As the race was again descending into the depravity that culminated in the Flood, God "Scattered them abroad from thence (Babel) upon the face of the earth," according to his first plan for men (Genesis 1:28-31).

Origin of Civil Government

God called Abraham out of this godless confusion and made him head of a nation in which to establish his government, and to set forth the relationship between the divine element and the human element in government. When he settled this nation in Canaan as his peculiar people, he gave it a government without the civil organization of other nations. The authority he delegated to it, including the death penalty, was vested in religious elders and judges. But the nation rebelled against God's simple, spiritual sufficient way and said to Samuel, the judge whom God had given them: "Make us a king to judge us like other nations" (1 Samuel 8:1-22). When Samuel sought counsel of God, God answered: "Hearken unto... the people... for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me that I should not be king over them." Consequently, against his primary will, but with his permissive, secondary will, as he suffered divorce among the Jews because of the hardness of their heart though from the beginning it had not been so (Matthew 19:8), God modified his government, and made Saul the first king of Israel. Is it not clear that the root of civil government springs out of the soil of disobedience and rebellion to God?

After a checkered history under many kings, mostly defeat and disaster, as the nation staggered into final Assyrian captivity, God chided: "Where now is thy king?... I have given you a king in my anger and have taken him away in my wrath" (Hosea 13:10-11). Thus, the Jews by rejecting God's first-choice government brought utter ruin upon themselves. Does not their history exemplify the Scripture, "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Psalms 106:15)? When will men learn that God's primary spiritual government meets all human needs, and that they do not need a secondary political government?

Questions

Is it true that, when Christians live their religion, neither discord among themselves, nor peace with the world, is possible?

Suggest some reasons why God does not permit his people to administer righteous vengeance upon their enemies.

Is the statement true that the logic of kindness is stronger than the logic of argument and force?

What change did God make, after the Flood, in his original government for mankind?

Out of what worldly ambition did the Tower of Babel grow? What was God's reaction to this first consolidation of humanity against him—this first vain dream of a Godless world empire?

What was the history and the end of the first Hebrew government with a human king that God, after faithfully warning the Jews of its many exactions, finally suffered the rebel Jews to establish?

Why does God need both the church and the state? Contrast the two with respect to their purposes and methods of operating.

04.37. LESSON 37

LESSON 37 The preceding "Study" held that the state is an expedient, ordained by God for those who are not in his church. As a student in the Nashville Bible School, I heard David Lipscomb teach this. and in mutual brotherly kindness debated the matter with G. G. Taylor of Louisville, Kentucky. I have since read adverse reviews of Brother Lipscomb's book on the subject, but my conviction that his position with respect to the origin of civil government is scriptural has never been shaken. Alexander Campbell wrote to the effect that the best government on earth, be it "English or American" said he, had within it the seeds of its own destruction, for it acknowledged not that God had set Christ upon his throne. The Twofold Function of the State

Neither the kinds of government, such as monarchy and republic, nor the moral character of individual governments and officers is discussed in Romans 13:1-14, but the source and function of the state itself as an institution. While it is true that God ordains civil government as an avenger for wrath to evil doers and true that, should all men become Christians, it would automatically cease to be, it is also true that the state "Is a minister of God to thee (a Christian) for good." Or as Peter puts it, "For praise to them that do well." Why should not rulers feel kindly toward Christians? They are submissive, law-abiding, loyal citizens in everything Caesar has a right to expect (Matthew 22:21), for in God's over-all government of his universe two sources of ultimate authority with clashing laws is impossible. Do not church and state bear much the same relationship to each other in time that heaven and hell bear to each other in eternity? "God is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4; Galatians 3:20), and has built into his creation the constitutional principle that physical and spiritual forces are so geared together for his long-range purpose that the universe is one orderly, logical, closely related, moral whole, with all things in both nature and religion working together for good to those who love him—both nature and religion are kind to obedient men, but harsh to others. Does not all this bear eloquent witness to "The riches of his grace," and unto "The praise of his glory," wisdom, foresight, power, and goodness? The Scripture, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee (God): the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalms 76:10), throws clear, strong light upon the workings of God's government of the world. Though the inhuman monster and matricide, Nero, was emperor of Rome when Peter and Paul wrote, they feared no evil, for they knew the watchful eye and the almighty, overruling arm of God would not suffer the "wrath" of Nero to go far enough really to hurt them and the church. Even in the event of their martyrdom, they would depart and be with Christ which was very far better (Php 1:23). No matter what happened, Nero would be "A minister of God... for good" to them. "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (Paul). "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good" (Peter? "When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Solomon). The Relationship of Christians to the State As I understand Christianity, the three rhyming words, "obey," "pay," and "pray" comprehend a Christian's duties to his state. Romans 13:1-14 shows that he must obey all laws and pay all taxes. Prayer is treated in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 : "I exhort... prayers... be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may live a tranquil and quiet

life in all godliness and gravity..." This passage considers the whole church as a "holy... royal priesthood" praying for the world of lost men (none of whom can pray adequately for themselves), particularly for kings and other rulers, that they may "come to a knowledge of the truth" in Christ. And just as Aaronic priests received a portion of the offerings of men whom they represented before God, so praying Christians are to be blessed with considerate rulers, under whom they may live in peace, as their portion. Such seems to be the import of this great Scripture, which thus furnishes another example of God's orderly, integrated, supreme rule over the whole earth. In his monumental history of the Roman Empire, Gibbon, admitting his perplexity as to why Rome persecuted Christians, writes: "Christians yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. They were a singular people who held an inoffensive mode of faith and worship." This, an unbelieving historian testifies concerning Christianity before it became so worldly and perverted that the nominally Christian emperor, Constantine, who delayed his baptism until on his deathbed in 337 A.D., made political use of it in 325 A.D. to strengthen the Roman Empire. In this manner, the gospel lost its superhuman sanctifying power, and the Medieval Dark Ages came on apace.

Early Christians who "declined the active cares of war and government" were simply following, as Peter exhorted them to do, in the steps of their Master, "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again." Surely, Christ said and did enough in the few hours between his arrest and death to cause their declining active participation in duties of state. When he said to Peter, "Put up the sword into the sheath: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," did he not "unbelt," as Tertullian says, every soldier who would his disciple be? "What can war but endless war still breed?" (Milton). "A man in armor is his armor's slave" (Browning). And did not Christ forever repudiate force as an agency to establish or propagate his kingdom when he added: "Or thinkest thou (Peter) that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" See the deep, impassable gulf he put between his kingdom and the kingdoms of the world when he said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is not my kingdom from hence." As Father Abraham "became a sojourner" in Canaan, so Christians, whose "citizenship is in heaven," become "Strangers and pilgrims on the earth... for they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." Let poor men, who have no "Spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," attend to the state. For them, does God ordain it, as the best he can do for them. But for Christians, he ordains a better way in which to honor him and to help a rebel world.

Questions

What precise point pertaining to the state is Paul discussing in Romans 13:1-14?

State clearly the twofold function of the state.

What bearing does the fact that two sources of ultimate authority for governing the world are impossible have on the truth that nothing can harm Christians?

What three words exhaust the duties of Christians to the state?

What information does Gibbon give about the relations of the early Christians to the state?

How should Milton's question, "What can war but endless war still breed?" impress the statesmen of the world today?

What do Christ's sayings to Peter and to Pilate teach concerning Christians taking up arms?

04.38. LESSON 38

LESSON 38 The very fact that Christians must be subject to the government under which they live precludes their inaugurating and operating it. Are they not avenging themselves, something God forbids their doing, when they help start or run the state, which God ordained as his "Avenger of wrath"? Furthermore, since "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:17), when his over-all government of the earth calls for a Pharaoh, Nero, or Hitler, if Christians try to prevent or overthrow the rule of such men, they fight against God. In the light of these truths how can Christians do otherwise than as Christ and his disciples did?—just ignore civil government, for the most part at least, as a necessary expedient to punish evil-doers, primarily, but useless as a direct agency for spiritual work.

Christians who think they can raise the standard of public morals and civic righteousness, and meet human need generally, by active participation in affairs of state, should remember that the New Testament never even intimates that such effort will succeed. It is not a question of the attitude of Christians toward human need, and good works for its alleviation, but of the means for doing such work. Christ created his church "For good works... that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10); Christians must be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). He said that his disciples were "The salt of the earth" and "The light of the world." By their unceasing Christian teaching and living, Christians pour a living, purifying stream into the putrid life of the world, similar to the power of gravitation in the physical world, which is something that all the non-Christian institutions on earth for the betterment of mankind combined cannot do. Would it not have been presumption had the Jews thought marching around Jericho at God's command was inadequate, and supplemented the marching with battering-rams? Would God have been obeyed and honored? Would the walls have fallen? Surely, God's spiritual government is adequate for all earthly human need. When Christians do not live separated, pilgrim lives, however, but compromise and become worldly, they lose their savor, hide their light, and have no salutary power. They need to remember Lot as well as to "Remember Lot's wife." When Lot, with nothing in him deep and high enough to trust God, went to make his home in Sodom, he not only lost power to help Sodom, but also barely escaped its destruction himself. We never read, "By faith Lot dwelt in Sodom." But we do read of Abraham's trusting God to fulfill, in his own time and way, his promise to give him Canaan, firmly refusing all compromising connections with the king of Sodom, even declining the gift of so much as a shoelace (Genesis 14:1-24), lest it appear that he, doubting God, took substitute gifts from men. How jealous Abraham was of God's honor and name! And do not forget that it was Abraham, who lived a sojourner a century in tents, not Lot, who sought convenience in Sodom, that had power with God in prayer on behalf of Sodom in her day of distress (Genesis 18:1-33). How much the church of God loses at any time, because Christians give more of themselves to the state than God's threefold requirement of obedience, payment of taxes, and prayer for rulers, only God can know. A church may be strong either spiritually or politically, but not strong both spiritually and politically at the same time. The Fulfillment of Law

(Romans 13:8-10) By connecting these three verses with Paul's long discussion of law in Romans and Galatians, the relationship between the law, which was given through Moses and grace, which came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17), becomes plain.

Briefly to summarize: Paul teaches that God embodied his eternal moral law in the special code of Ten Commandments, which he wrote on tables of stone and gave to the Jews to convince them (and through them all other men) that, inasmuch as no man can obey God's law perfectly, he must look elsewhere for his justification—that is, that legal salvation is impossible. Once convinced of this, earnest men in self-despair are ready to look to Another for salvation. In other words, law was given that grace might be sought; then, grace came that law might be fulfilled. When Christ came therefore, the Mosaic code having done its particular work, was, as a system of religion, abolished.

It is at this level that Romans 13:8-10 fits into Christianity. A Christian is a man who has acknowledged the justice of his being sentenced to death as a law-breaker, and has accepted Christ's gracious death in lieu of his own death so truly that he dies to self in order to become Christ's grateful, eager slave, not only to love Christ himself, but also to love everybody and everything that Christ loves, for the same reason and in the same way that Christ loves them. This is the love that faileth not. Such total commitment to Christ is the difference between Saul the Pharisee and Paul the chosen apostle and pattern saint.

Caesar can make good laws, but he cannot gender the love in his subjects to heed them—hence the sword. Law, even God's law, can but give directives to show what should be done, demand of loveless men the impossible conduct of love, and punish disobedience. Law has no help for the victim of lawlessness; it discovers wounds for which it has no healing. Men cannot climb up to heaven on a ladder of law. The fulfillment of law, which law itself vainly seeks, is found in love, which, as when a tender mother cares for her sick child, turns "hard duty into holy delight." Only when love is absent, is a consciousness of law and duty necessary. A heathen who has never heard of the law of Moses, upon becoming a Christian, should soon have the commandments of Moses written on his heart—an inner Decalogue, so to speak—and through love, without a sense of law, be lawful in his human dealings. "He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law."

Christians do not need to be under law in order to be lawful. In truth, they can never fulfill law until they are delivered by the power of God from the realm of law and of flesh, and put into the realm of grace and of Spirit. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). "If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law" (Galatians 5:18). "They that are in the flesh cannot please god" (Romans 8:8). Christ does not abrogate law. Love does not disregard it, but, on her magical feet, she outruns law, on her leaden feet, and does the good deed before the law arrives.

Questions

Can Christians to whom God says "Avenge not yourselves" help create and operate the state that God ordains as his "avenger for wrath"?

When conditions are such that God wants such men as Pharaoh (Romans 9:17); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:17), Nero and Hitler to rule states, can Christians be active participants in their Christ-less brutalities?

:1. Do you agree with the statement that the church may be strong either spiritually or politically, but not in both ways at the same time?

Can a church convert the world, when it is a part of the world?

Interpret the sentence that law was given that grace might be sought; then, grace came that law might be fulfilled.

Put into your own words the description of Christians that this "Study" contains.

What is the scriptural and efficient way for Christians to do "good works"?

04.39. LESSON 39

LESSON 39

Romans 13:1-14, "The Christian Citizen's Chapter," teaches three practical lessons, namely: Christians must be loyal to their government (Romans 13:1-7), just in their dealings with men (Romans 13:8-10), and clean in their personal lives (Romans 13:11-14).

Christianity should appeal to men because of its simplicity and certainty. It is built upon the same natural, simple, yet profound, principle that moves a child to love its mother. "God is love... We love, because he first loved us." Christianity therefore, distills into reciprocative love between God and man. And unless it can fortify man against doubt, dread, and death, it is not adapted to his deepest needs. Sinning, suffering, dying men, the sons of dead fathers, can but wonder whether life means anything or leads anywhere. Their "Reach exceeds their grasp." They feel that they were made for eternity and long for satisfying fulfillment of their nature. Christ's, "In this world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), gives certainty and finality. Verily, Christ is the invincible "Cheer-leader" of his people.

Love not only fulfills and takes the place of the countless laws and rules for human behavior, but it also goes on into something codified law does not attempt to do, the vast, living world of courtesy and good manners. With law obeyed, the debt of duty is paid in full; but love is an eternal debt, forever being paid, but never liquidated. "Owe no man anything, save to love one another." Christianity requires neither economic, academic, and character entrance tests, nor asks its adherents to define love and to explain the philosophy of its subtle workings. It is enough if they feel and exhibit the power and goodness of love.

Yes, Christianity, like all great things, is sublime in its divine simplicity and certainty. And its first human requirement is that the natural man become as simple and honest as a child, acknowledge his complete religious ruin, and be willing to follow God in Christ through the Spirit to the end. Not until he does this can he know the Christian love that, without sense of law, fulfills law plus.

Christ's Return to Earth

"Already it is time for you to awake out of sleep: for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor Of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day." As at the beginning of the hortatory section of Romans Paul exhorted Christians not to be conformed to the world by urging them to remember the mercies of God (Romans 12:1-2), so here he continues to exhort them to be unworldly by urging them to be looking always for coming salvation. Thus, he appeals to their memory and to their hope (push and pull), both unsurpassed motives to persuade them to live clean lives.

Christians in Paul's day were such earnest, honest believers in Christ's coming back to earth that he knew, when he wrote this, his readers, without his expressly saying he did, would understand

that he did have this doctrine in mind. Hence, the "salvation" of the text is the salvation, including the resurrection of the bodies of saints, that Christ is to bring with him when he comes (1 Thessalonians 4:16). As Christ had exhorted that, inasmuch as no one knew the time of his return, all should, lest they be found unready, live in wakeful expectancy of his coming, so is Paul here using the immanency of Christ's coming back as a motive for clean living. "Everyone that bath this hope set on him (Christ) purifieth himself, even he (Christ) is pure" (1 John 3:3). Even with this hope, there was much impurity in the church during the life of Paul and John. But who can say that, without it, conditions would not have been worse? Does not God in wisdom and kindness leave the date of Christ's coming unrevealed in order to give every generation of Christians in their grim struggle between flesh and Spirit the advantage of this potent help? Does not our generation need it?

Paul did not know when Christ would come to dispel the long night of sin, which began when Adam turned his back on God and walked away into the darkness of his own shadow mortally wounded, and to usher in the immeasurably longer day of his presence, but he did believe that he would come before another 4,000 years rolled by; furthermore, he knew he might come any hour. And we know that "salvation" is now 1,900 years nearer than when Paul wrote. If any difference therefore, the certainty of the event, linked with the uncertain time element, should be better cause for spiritual living now than it was in the days of Paul and Christ. In our teaching and exhorting, why do we use it so little? His second coming should be given its scriptural place in Christ's history. Other cardinal doctrines in his life, such as his pre-existence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and indwelling life through the Spirit, without his climactic return, are but an unfinished story. The New Testament gives much attention to "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), the impending act in the ever unfolding drama of redemption, as the means, par excellence, of keeping the church, which is espoused "as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2), ready to meet her Bridegroom when he comes. The loss, practically, of this hope, which came all too soon, may be called "The light that failed in the church." How the loss works is seen vividly in the servant of the parable, who, saying, "My lord tarrieth," began "to eat and drink with the drunken" and "to beat his fellow-servants." Our Lord knew that his people's ceasing to look for him would result in their sinfully indulging their bodily appetites and mistreating their brethren. The Bible closes with Christ's promise, "Behold, I come quickly," and John's echo, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

Putting on Christ In Galatians, Paul says that those who had been "Baptized into Christ did put on Christ." That is, having put on Christ's righteousness in baptism, they were properly dressed to appear before God. Here, "Putting on Christ" has another meaning. Christians live Christ over again by letting him dwell in them and express himself through their personalities. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Paul). Both of the meanings may be illustrated by children in play who, after putting on the garments of adults, impersonate them. Romans 13:11-14 tells Christians why and when to arise, how to dress, and how to walk and live. What a contrast between Christians who make "No provision... to fulfill the lusts" of the flesh and worldlings whose every thought centers on ways to multiply and prolong gratification of the flesh!

Questions

State three practical lessons which are found in Romans 13:1-14.

With what meaning does Paul use the word "salvation" in Romans 13:1-14?

Show that Christianity meets man's deepest needs.

What is the first requirement that Christianity makes of men?

Show that Paul appeals to both the memory and the hope of Christians in exhorting them to be unworldly.

Show that Christ, Paul and John all use the immanency of Christ's second coming as an inducement for Christian living.

In what two senses does Paul use the phrase, "Putting on Christ"?

04.40. LESSON 40

LESSON 40 The hortatory section of Romans (Romans 12:1-21, Romans 13:1-14, Romans 14:1-23, Romans 15:1-33, Romans 16:1-27) deals with various human relationships. Romans 12:1-21 pertains to love among Christians, and to love as manifested by them toward non-Christians. Romans 13:1-14 teaches that the citizenship of Christians is in heaven, whence they expect Christ to come and complete their deliverance "Out of this present evil world" (Galatians 1:1-24, Galatians 2:1-21, Galatians 3:1-29, Galatians 4:1-31), in which they are but passive, submissive "sojourners and pilgrims." And now Romans 14:1-23 shows that the relationship among Christians who differ in spiritual knowledge, maturity, and insight is mutual love and toleration. These chapters require the church to be in submission to the state without, and to exercise reciprocal sympathetic understanding with respect to its differences within. Elemental Christian truth separates the church from the world, and elemental Christian love unites the church.

"Strong" and "Weak" Christians

(Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 1 Corinthians 9:1-27, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33)

Because of disparity in natural capacity, age, mental development, social and religious background, and other constitutional and circumstantial inequalities, differences in any congregation of Christians are inevitable. It is not only impossible to have a congregation without these differences, but it is also undesirable, for therein, "Through that which every joint supplieth," lies the opportunity for mutual edification, and for "Building up of itself in love." The home and the local church taken together constitute God's training school to educate his children in interrelated forbearance, patience and unselfish love.(take and give) —all requisite qualities for entrance into the eternal "Sabbath rest for the people of God." Christians who do not grow in grace and knowledge under the chastening, tempering, mellowing discipline of these two divine institutions miss much that purifies, sweetens, and sublimates life for time and eternity.

Paul devotes Romans 14:1-23 and part of Romans 15:1-33 to the relationship between "strong" and "weak" brethren, and, if we get his timeless lesson, we must needs know the sense in which he uses these terms. "But him that is weak in faith receive ye, yet not for decision of scruples." This "faith" cannot be the absolute justifying faith in Christ as Savior, for that faith can never be weak. Some Christians in Paul's day, though accepting Christ as the only Savior, had religious regard for the Sabbath, circumcision, and other Mosaic legalism and ritualism. "Some, being used until now to the idol," were morbidly fearful of honoring an idol by unwittingly eating meat that had been sacrificed to it. Yet a graver weakness, indeed the critical weakness involved in the matter, some lacked moral courage and integrity to be true to their conscientious "scruples"—a weakness in obedience to known duty. These weaknesses were not necessarily exclusive of each other.

"We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves... For Christ also pleased not himself" (Romans 15:1-3). Paul's "strong" man knows the difference

between primary and secondary things—that is, between things eternal, essential, and inflexible about which God speaks precisely and finally, and things that according to their very nature are flexible and adaptable (like our backbones for instance), and imply human study, experience, and change. He knows that "No idol is anything," that the character of meat is not changed by being offered to an idol, that Christ makes all meats clean, and that Christians dedicate all their days to God. And his knowing that men may differ from him without being inferior to him helps him to be fair and honest with them, and to see things in perspective and in relative importance. This "strong" man sees that the differences between him and his "weak" brother do not involve the everlastingly fixed, primary things of Christianity, but that, because they are neither right nor wrong within themselves, they lie in the realm of religiously indifferent things, about which brethren may, if they differ aright, safely and profitably differ. He is not "strong" because he has a "superior mind," but because he has the mind of Christ.

Presumptuous Meddling

Such diversity in the church at Rome, Corinth, or elsewhere, any time, however, may be fertile soil for friction, tension, mutual incrimination, and bitter feelings. The "strong" man may scornfully consider his "weak" brother an ignorant, narrow-minded man who needs a guardian. The "weak" man on the other hand may captiously consider his "strong" brother a self-indulgent man, no better than a worldling. Fertile soil indeed for "earthly, sensual, devilish" pride, prejudice, and envy! "Where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." Christians, mistaking fleshly feelings and interests for spiritual loyalty to truth and principle ("conscience bribed by inclination"), are easily drawn into mere quibbling. Only at the foot of the cross can such matters be settled.

Romans 14:1-23 calls Christians of all time from vain wanderings in the fringes of Christianity to its center by simply reminding them that "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," that, since "God hath received" them all, despite their diversities, into his own family, they are all sons of God; by simply reminding them that Christ died and arose to demonstrate the truth that he is their sole Owner and Judge, as well after, as before, they die. Does not this throw light upon the meaning of mysterious death and the intriguing intermediate state? In effect he asks: "Do you not see that your judging other Christians is but idle, presumptuous meddling, for to their own Master, only, they stand or fall? How dare you! Who do you think you are anyway?" He concludes his earnest, solemn plea: "So then each one shall give account of himself to God." And what is more arresting, sobering, and better cooling for the hot tempers of overwrought men than the realization of their accountability to God for every feeling, word, and deed! Is it amiss to remember that Moses provided no offering for presumptuous sinning?

Possibly Paul gets his cue for this divine counsel to Christians from the unforgettable, post-resurrection manifestation of Christ at Tiberius, in which he "manifested himself" as Lord of the life and the death of his servants (John 21:1-25). As Peter on that occasion, after receiving the sketch of his own life-work and death, asked Christ about John only to be admonished, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? follow thou me," so Peter here makes following Jesus in supreme loyalty and extreme devotion the fixed pivot round which the life and death of all Christians revolve. No matter what "devices" Satan employs, he must gain no advantage over them at this vital center (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Questions

With what matter does Romans 14:1-23 deal?

What is the difference between primary and secondary things in the church?

Why do Christians inevitably and desirably differ about secondary things?

What does it mean for a man to bribe his conscience by his inclination?

Describe Paul's "weak" and his "strong" man.

Why do differences about secondary things often cause trouble and division in a congregation?

What is Paul's chief point against brethren judging each other concerning secondary, or discretionary, matters?

04.41. LESSON 41

LESSON 41

Romans 14:1-23 falls into two main parts. The first part, consisting of Romans 14:1-12, urges that it will help Christians to be mutually sympathetic and tolerant in their unavoidable inequalities and differences concerning things about which more than one good way of procedure is possible to remember that every one of them renders a strict, individual account to Christ, his real Master in life and in death, before whose judgment he stands or falls.

Romans 14:13-23 is an especially effective presentation of the place and power of reciprocal sympathy in Christian edification and fruitfulness. Who does not desire and need an understanding friend to whom he feels free to go, day or night, with assurance of sympathetic hearing, comfort, and help? In a world full of "the invisibly wounded," no one is so strong that he does not have weak hours when he needs, and no one is so weak that he cannot be sometimes, such a friend. What an opportunity —"A door opened, which no man can shut!" The Sovereignty of Conscience In studying Romans 2:1-29, we found that conscience, as is memory, imagination, or reasoning, is a distinct, innate human faculty; that its office is, not to ascertain the truthfulness of things, but to see that its owner is true to himself and follows his convictions; that in violating his conscience, a man so destroys his moral integrity as to make moral, spiritual living impossible; and therefore that the most deadly thing any man can do is to trifle with his conscience, for in so doing he is tampering with the com-pass of his soul.

Paul has been called the apostle of grace and of faith, and he may with equal propriety be called the apostle of conscience. This is not to intimate that he is a spiritual dictator, who cracks a whip over the conscience of others, but that, in a spirit he caught no doubt from his Lord, he believes magnificently in the unfettered conscience of all believers in Christ. He believes that within the large, flexible domain of discretionary matters, but only in this domain of course, a Christian is a law unto himself, and should be left to his own sense of right and expediency, for his conscience is king. Although Paul so respects and reveres conscience, he knows quite well that when Christ speaks explicitly, a Christian conscience trusts and obeys implicitly regardless of all cost. For championing this pre-eminently Christian doctrine of the dignity, honor, sanctity, and freedom of a living soul to learn and to grow, both Christ and Paul lost their lives at the hands of bigoted, dead slaves of tradition and prejudice, who had developed a fatal blind spot in their spiritual vision. Christianity is the only religion that produces true, noble individualism and independent personality, which progressively grows stronger for all, both strong and weak. This growth in character, contrary to man's thought and expectation comes, not by way of self-assertion and crushing human authority and power, but by way of going outside of self for communion with Christ through the indwelling "Power of the Holy Spirit." No individual is merged with another and lost, but all individuals are cultivated and ripened unto harvest. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments."

Paul exhorts the "strong" to receive the "weak" cordially, without prying into his attitude towards discretionary things, trusting the Lord to make him stand and grow, according to his new, spiritual birth and nature. This protects the "weak," who is afflicted with a conscience that does not prevent his doing, under pressure, what he thinks to be wrong, by pleading with the "strong," with whom Paul obviously is in sympathy, not to take advantage of a brother who is suffering from a "weak" conscience, somewhat as an angry man might be shamed out of striking a cripple. On the other hand, of course, the "weak" must be willing to learn and grow. In this manner, would Paul correct the defect of love in the one and the defect of knowledge and conscience in the other. When a man is converted to Christ and ready to be baptized into him, Christ, because he actually loves him, is ready without arbitrarily deciding his conscientious "scruples" for him to receive him into his church, and give him an honest chance to learn, grow, and reverently work out his own convictions. In the light of this, who has the right to ask him, without the risk of becoming a sectarian, more -than concerning his faith in Christ, the one foundation of the one church? But every man who is not crucified to the flesh has within him a potential pope and Pharisee who demands that every other man pronounce "Shibboleth" as he pronounces it (Judges 12:6). The flesh which does not, and cannot, please God (Romans 8:8), is similar to Procrustes, the mythical giant of ancient Attica, who after seizing and tying hapless travelers through his petty state to an iron bed, either stretched them or cut off their feet until they fit the bed.

Paul and Peter

(Galatians 2:11-21)

Momentous matters and perplexing situations may arise in connection with things which within themselves are religiously indifferent. Even Peter became Paul's "weak" man and precipitated a crisis in the church when he "fearing them that were of the circumcision," ceased to eat with Gentile Christians. It was his Christian liberty to eat or not, as it was Paul's to circumcise or not, according to which choice would be in the interest of Christianity. When he chose not to eat in circumstances that introduced the caste system into the church, thus destroying its universality, Paul had to resist him openly. This occurrence in Antioch throws light on the difficult problem involved in Romans 14:1-23. The apostles did not differ in primary doctrines; Peter only acted as if they did. His cowardly conduct, which belied his doctrine, constituted his "dissimulation," or hypocrisy. Had Peter been a proud, headstrong, self-seeking man, the consequences would have been deadly. But his being honestly converted to Christ, "Crucified... unto the world" (Galatians 6:14), and Christian to the core, made it possible to show him the appalling results of his mistake. Who, knowing Peter, can doubt his eager readiness to heal the fresh wound he had ignorantly inflicted upon the body of his Lord? We know he took his correction meekly and continued to honor and love Paul (2 Peter 3:16-17). Surely, God's purpose in recording this episode was that his church might have an example for all time of how differences over things that are within themselves neither right nor wrong ("Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better" (1 Corinthians 8:8), should be handled.

Questions

To what is "A door opened, which no man can shut," applied in this "Study"?

What is conscience designed to do, and what is it designed not to do?

Why is trifling with his conscience so hazardous for a man?

How does Paul correct the deficiency of love in the "strong" and the deficiency of knowledge in the "weak"?

How admirably is Christianity adapted to develop ever-maturing nobility of personality in every Christian?

What does "Every man who is not dead to the flesh has within him a potential Pope and Pharisee," mean?

What may be learned about handling such differences as these in Romans 14 from the disagreement between Paul and Peter?

04.42. LESSON 42

LESSON 42

We can never know the full practical workings nor climb up to the highest fruit of Christianity until we distinguish between its inflexible doctrines and its flexible practices. The error that Paul fought so uncompromisingly in Galatians is primary error, for it robs Christianity of its superhuman power to deliver men from sin and from sinning. Concerning this fundamental perversion, he could not have written either, "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind," or, "I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself; save to him that accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean," as he writes in Romans 14:1-23 concerning less vital, secondary errors.

Heavenly Wisdom The arena wherein practical choices between primary and secondary things are to be made should be entered with "fear and trembling." The woeful mismanagement of things in this realm, which has plagued the church from of old, is still with us. Had matters, such as separating into classes for study, unfulfilled prophecy, and co-operation of congregations that, though they do not necessarily involve doctrines and practices contrary to the doctrine we have learned (are there not Christians on both sides?), disturb the church, had been dealt with in the Christian way, how different things would now be! Wise handling of puzzling situations which often arise in connection with such matters is the severest test of the acumen, wisdom, honesty, love, and all round, spiritual maturity of elders. Compared to the relatively simple duty of condemning moral breaches, prudent management of such complexities, demanding keen discernment, delicate balance, and righteous compromise, needs must be difficult. In this field, even Peter, lacking Paul's sincerity and spiritual insight, made his tragic mistake.

Nothing but pious study, earnest prayer, straight thinking, deep feeling, patient conference, and above all, brotherly love, will meet the requirements of Romans 14:1-23. Neither snubby tolerance nor ruthless intolerance of a "weak" brother's honest "scruples," but sympathetic tolerance, born of love, that gives him, with the help of his brethren, time to outgrow his deficiencies will do. Tolerance neither leaves a brother alone in his false convictions nor takes them away from him by force. Capacity for this work must be included in the "wisdom," beyond human wisdom, which James says may be had through undoubting prayer. Can a Christian "Overthrow... the work of God," "Sin against Christ," and offend "The brother for whom Christ died"? Since Christ was so deadly earnest, must a Christian not be earnest? In this realm, Christians may get their best experiential discipline, ripest, sweetest "fruit of the Spirit," and greatest enrichment of personality and life. Your conscience is the unchanging innate consciousness that you ought to do what you think is right and refrain from doing what you think is wrong. Both its constraining and restraining powers are great; it is the most searching test of conduct. When a conscientious man's convictions are wrong, his mind, not his conscience, needs changing. Paul's becoming a Christian changed his conscience no more than it changed his memory. Every man must reverently obey his conscience; in violating it, he defiles his most holy place, and commits himself to the vicious

principle of self-will and lawlessness—becomes, so to speak, a willing sinner. Neither the "weak" nor the "strong," even for the sake of peace, may force the conscience of the other. Before either can contend that discretionary matters involve his conscience at all, he must make the common error of mistaking his opinion, prejudice, pride, and stubbornness for his conscience.

Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 1 Corinthians 9:1-27, 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 supplemented by, "A factious man after the first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned (condemned by his own conduct, not self-confessed)" (Titus 3:10-11), give God's infinitely wise way of keeping his church free from proud, self-seeking, incorrigible men, who must rule or rain. God lets it be known, in this firm and final manner, that he does not intend to give contentious partisans the right to become petty, vexatious, destructive tyrants in his church.

Though we may not know all the reasons why Paul saw into the heart of truth better than Peter did, we do know that men are expected to interpret moral things, and judge their relative values. Said Christ to the Sews: "Ye, hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right" (Luke 12:56-57)? Had the Jews been as much interested in God's way as they pretended to be, they would not have been so blind about Christ's identity.

Even so Christians are now expected to discern the difference between primary and secondary things, and to understand their relative importance. Christ still wants "Full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14)—men who can of themselves judge what is right. As parents rejoice to see their children, no longer needing directions about every detail, become able to reach sound moral judgments for themselves, so God rejoices to see his children grow in powers of spiritual interpretation and application of the principles of Christianity to actual life.

Paul Himself Lived Romans 14:1-23

Paul, who at supreme cost heroically stood unflinchingly for all primary gospel truth, but, who in secondary things became all things to all men that he might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:22), is the best example of the Christian discrimination between essential truth and discretionary conduct. He gnawed on no bare bones, that he might give himself wholly to big, worthwhile things, including correction of the "weak" who were wrecking the church. He stressed no incidentals, and majored in no minors. And what truer measure of a man than the size of the thing he deems worthy of his best, lifelong endeavor and devotion?

Unbounded zeal in essential things, brotherly liberty in discretionary things, and tender toleration for the "weak" characterized Paul. He was very superior in mind, conscience, and energy, yet withal as sensitive in feeling as a gentle woman. His Christian blend of remarkable inflexibility in things divinely fixed, and his no less remarkable flexibility in secondary things accounts for his enduring, peerless power and influence in the church. Next to Christ himself, Paul is the best example of the strength, tenderness, adaptability, sanity and balanced wholeness of Christianity. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me" (Paul).

Questions

How important is it to differentiate between the primary error Paul combats in Galatians and the secondary errors he combats in Romans 14:1-23?

Why are problems involving secondary matters so hard to solve?

Why are the constraining and the restraining power of conscience such searching tests of conduct?

What grave mistake must a man make before he can think that discretionary matters involve his conscience at all?

Show by the Scriptures that God does not give a contentious man the right to be a vexatious, destructive tyrant in his church.

Does Christ's question, "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" apply to the realm that Romans 14:1-23 covers?

Show that Paul himself was a superlative example of the gospel he preaches in Romans 14:1-23.

04.43. LESSON 43

LESSON 43

Romans 14:1-23 ends with a plea for sincerity, consistency, and moral integrity. "Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth. But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." This verse, in its setting, means that a man whose conscience prevents his doing what he thinks is wrong is a true, blessed man; but that a man whose conscience allows him to do what he thinks is wrong wrongs himself, for this violation of his conscience insulates the one point at the center of his moral being with which God can make spiritual contact. Who can read this chapter without realizing that Christian doctrines are of unequal value, and that big and little things should never exchange places? Men must not make things which God does not make conditions of salvation tests of Christian fellowship, because in so doing they reject those whom God receives, and make divisions in the church over trifles. To separate believers from unbelievers is right, but to separate believers from other believers is wrong. Blessed is the Christian who keeps Christian things in Christian proportion.

Possibly, Paul's purpose in writing Romans 14:1-23 was to correct an acute condition in Rome, caused by the contention of the "weak" that only their view of eating idolatrous meat could be right, and that therefore the whole church must adopt it. In the very nature of things, men whose meekness does not equal their "weakness" are more likely, than are the "strong," to push their opinions and prejudices to the extremity of overriding the conscience of others, and to form parties in the church. In fact, proud, "weak" brethren may be so unconscious of their "weakness" that when they are told of it, instead of being grieved as Peter was when Paul rebuked him, they are insulted. Romans 14:1-23 and 1 John 3:11-12, "This is the message which we heard from the beginning, that we should love one another not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother," make it impossible for any Christian to deny, as Cain did, that he is his "brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9).

Twofold Truth and Unity

Christian unity is so closely connected with the subject matter of Romans 14:1-23 that understanding it will help to understand and apply the teaching of this chapter. The church is an organism consisting of a solid core of fundamental, common truth surrounded by a wealth of variety and diversity in its members. All Christians must be irrevocably committed to this core of primary truth, but concerning the surrounding secondary truth, they must be adaptable. The unity therefore of the church does not require the sameness of an ant hill, or the confinement of a prison cell. Differences in ability, personality, and maturity among the members of a congregation should be welcomed as a priceless asset, for they contribute to fulfillment of its worship and work. The existence and fruitfulness of any organism depend upon all its various parts doing their particular work—"Each for all and all for each." "If they (the members of a human body) were all one member, where was the body" (1 Corinthians 12:19)? As God, in making a tree, gave it central

unity and the necessary diversity of root, trunk, limb, and leaf, just so in building his church, he gave it central unity and the necessary diversity of its members, who must not be forced into a straightjacket of conventional conformity. Concerning secondary things, externally enforced uniformity breeds stagnation and decay; too much freedom (license) breeds disorder and anarchy. Yes, there is a liberty that destroys unity, and there is a unity that destroys liberty. But "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17) and unity. And unity and liberty as they are interrelated in God's church (or tree) are cohesive and creative. "The Rock (God), his work is perfect" (Deuteronomy 32:4). One of the most bitter, stubborn, and strategic fights of Paul's life was with the Jews for Christian freedom, spontaneity, and fullness against legal bondage, dead customs, and empty formalities of religion.

Ephesians 4:1-16 sets forth twofold Christian unity. It deals first with the constitutional, absolute "Unity of the Spirit," which comprises seven basic, unifying facts. This unity is the gracious, free gift of God through Christ in the Spirit, which must be kept "in the bond of peace." Then follows the relative, increasing unity of fellowship, which is progressively acquired through growth and experience. The former is the fruit of God's personal work, and is obtained from him. It is man's responsibility, through the "obedience of faith," to work out the latter "Till we all attain (attained, not obtained) unto the unity of the faith... unto him, who is the head, even Christ." In the realm of relative unity, no man can contend that "conscientious scruples and loyalty to principle" give him the freedom to destroy the freedom that is in Christ Jesus. Christ's freemen must be above contentions about secondary things. Knowing that Christian unity is organic unity in diversity, they examine their differences in love, with a sense of only partial knowledge, and learn in such matters to disagree without being disagreeable.

Romans 15:1-13 In these verses, Paul gives deep, comprehensive emphasis to the mutual tolerance and tenderness that brethren of unequal spiritual knowledge and understanding should always manifest toward each other. In order to assure a goodly yield of this choice, Christian fruit, he plows up the rich subsoil of the authority, antiquity, and utility of the Jewish Scriptures, and of God's personal character and methods, as he endlessly works to guide Jews and Gentiles unitedly to glorify him. To serve as both model and motive for Christians, Paul weaves into this great passage part of Psalms 69:9, which states that Christ pleased not himself, but suffered reproaches, means for God, that the will of his Father might be done. It is instructive to note that John 2:17 uses the rest of this verse, "Zeal for thy house shall eat me up," to explain Christ's challenging Jewish hate by cleansing the temple. This bit of Scripture gives Paul, who, as all holy men are, is ever eager to magnify the sacred writings and their author, the occasion to write: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus: that with one accord ye may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Questions

Explain Romans 14:23 in its context.

Enlarge upon, "Blessed is the Christian who keeps Christian things in Christian proportion."

Why are "weak" men more likely to be domineering than "strong" men are?

Why should any congregation of Christians welcome both constitutional and circumstantial diversity among its members?

Study the meaning of, "There is a liberty that destroys unity, and there is a unity that destroys liberty."

Explain the difference between absolute and relative unity (Ephesians 4:1-32). Does understanding this difference support the teaching of Romans 14:1-23?

How does Paul in Romans 15:1-3 close his long, earnest plea for Christian unity in the midst of diversity?

04.44. LESSON 44

LESSON 44 The old, inbred, mutual intolerance of Jew and Gentile made their becoming "One new man" in Christ, "so making peace," difficult. Jews had been rocking in the cradle of law so long that they could scarcely learn to walk in grace. The Jew-Gentile question, a burning issue that threatened the very life of the early church from Cornelius onward, found a prominent place in the inspired writings of the time. Because the question involved the perpetual, elemental warfare between the flesh and the spirit, divine wisdom preserved these writings for us. The way Paul brings this question into Romans again is evidence that it had a part in causing the unbrotherly behavior among brethren of different background and spiritual discernment. "For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Romans 15:8-9). This means Christ, not only fulfilled the promises God made the Jewish fathers, but also, though no promise was made Gentiles, God had them in mind from the beginning, and purposed out of pure, uncovenanted mercy, in due time, to graft them into the covenantal olive tree, that they too might have hope in Christ. To use another figure, God always intended Gentiles should draw from his public well of salvation, without having to get license from the Jews. Therefore, it being God's will that both be saved, Jews, praising God especially for his fidelity and. Gentiles especially for his mercy, should be knit together in brotherly love, for no matter what they ate, or what days they kept, without "The Spirit of Christ" they were "none of his" (Romans 8:9). A statement of this conclusion for Jews, particularly, who were the chief offenders in the feud (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16), might run: "Since God included the Gentiles in his original plan, and since Christ now receives them, you should receive them too, without arrogant condescension." As final proof, Paul uses four Jewish Scriptures—the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets all represented, as Christ himself used all three in his post-resurrection instruction (Luke 24:44)—to show that Christ was intended from of old for Gentiles as well as for Jews. The Holy Spirit, knowing how selfish and loveless brethren would always be with one another about discretionary things, gave through Paul the timeless admonition: "Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves... For Christ also pleased not himself." As a big brother in a family feels responsible for his little brother, so a Christian favored in brain, education, and personality should feel toward his brethren who are less favored in these particulars. Rather than flaunting his advantages, let him have them to himself "before God" (Romans 14:22); let him, remembering he is his "brother's keeper," use his ability and lawful liberty as trusts from God, in the "meekness and gentle-ness of Christ," to build up the whole church in love. If Christ bore all the wickedness his worst enemies could inflict, surely his disciples can forbear the weaknesses of their friends! If eating flesh caused his "brother to stumble," Paul would "Eat no flesh for evermore" (1 Corinthians 8:13).

It is amazing how this simple, spiritual, sufficient divine way oils the machinery of church life, both corporately and individually. Without it, many tangled problems, including those that often arise concerning borderline vocations, entertainment. and amusements, are not soluble. I have read of a big dog, that ordinarily swam the swift river which ran through his master's estate, going far out

of his way to a bridge, when a little dog was to cross with him!

God and His Word The fact that Paul characterized God as "The God of patience... of comfort... of hope... of peace" (all in Romans 15:1-33) points up how fundamental to true religion God's character is. Inasmuch as worship fashions the character of worshippers after the character of the god they worship, Christians who worship God in spirit and truth will grow in patience, comfort, hope, and peace. Their worship at church, at home, and in secret must be designed and conducted in such a manner as to increase in them the sense of God's personal presence, reality, and character—upon this depend the depth and genuineness of their religion.

How can Christians afford to forsake their "own assembling together," when Christ, giving them the unspeakably blessed privilege of meeting and getting better acquainted with him, meets with them (Matthew 18:20)? Is not the abstruse spiritual meeting and communion with Christ, and the eating of him in order to live (John 6:57) the real purpose of their assembling? The less the inner, spiritual life and understanding worshippers have, the more importance they attach to outer, fleshly things, such as meats, days, forms, and ceremonies. Note that Paul's characterization of God with its bearing on worshippers supports his plea for the unity and peace of the church pertaining to things of no intrinsic moral value, for it is difficult to live in peace with impatient, peevish, hopeless, fussy people.

Paul finally takes leave of the subject, over which he has lingered from the beginning of Romans 14:1-23, with the great benedictory prayer: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). Behold, the largeness and fullness of this short prayer! Does it not put to shame our poor, little praying? God is the God of eternal hope, which his worshippers drink in from him. Joy is energetic, peace is restful, and hope is an unfailing tonic for drooping spirits on dark days. But all depends on "believing," the deep, solid granite ledge upon which the human side of Christianity rests. "All things are possible to him that believeth," but not a single thing of endurance is possible until he believes. The God of patience and of hope! What, if God should become impatient and lose hope! Has he not always had ample cause (has he any less cause now?) to grow weary of mankind? "It is of Jehovah's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22). God is patient, restful, and hopeful because he is eternal. "Through the ages one increasing purpose runs"—"One far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." God is infallibly working out his glorious destiny for his universe (Colossians 1:18-20). God's world must at last be right (Luke 18:7-8). Give him time! "Blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18).

What of God's word? It is God's means, says Christ in John 6:44; John 6:55, of drawing men, who hear and learn, to himself. Every line in the Bible from Genesis through Revelation was "written for our learning." But, no matter what other riches we may gather from its sacred pages, we have not "learned" until we come intelligently to God, worship him in spirit and in truth, and become "A habitation of God in the Spirit" through Christ (Ephesians 2:13-22).

Questions

Why was the Jew-Gentile question so prominent in the early church?

Why should Christian Jews praise God especially for his fidelity, and Christian Gentiles especially for his mercy?

Why does Paul use the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets in Romans 15:9-12?

Why is the knowledge of God's character so necessary to his people?

Explain how the Lord's Supper helps Christians to understand and appropriate John 6:50-58.

What do you get from Romans 15:13 about the cooperation of God and man in prayer? about the benefits Christians derive by means of prayer?

Though preachers have preached, and men have heard the word of God, have men "learned" and come to Christ (John 6:45) unless God's very life is imparted to them by means of a spiritual birth?

04.45. LESSON 45

LESSON 45

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," and they are "profitable... that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." The fact that these scriptures refer to the Old Testament welds the entire Bible into a perfect compend of God's complete will for all mankind. Paul's reminding Timothy that from a babe he had known the Jewish writings which were able to make him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ" clinches this invaluable truth. Only two of the many ways these writings make us wise unto salvation can now be considered.

First—The most difficult, yet absolutely necessary, thing for men of Adam's fallen, broken race to learn is that they are so woefully wrecked and shattered that only the God who made them has the wisdom and power to repair, and make them whole again—that only the creator can re-create. Now, God's history of humanity in the Old Testament is such that readers who are not convinced of the universal corruption and depravity of man's heart, and of their own imperative, personal need of wisdom and strength beyond their own, are blind. To deepen this conviction if possible, however, many divine estimates of man, such as, "And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5), and "The heart is deceitful above all things, and is exceeding corrupt: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9), are added to the history. In Romans 3:1-31, Paul quotes several passages from the Old Testament to prove that "There is none righteous, no, not one... for all have sinned." In this manner does God lock every, individual man fast in the death house of sin, to which Christ is the only key.

All secular history, including the state of the world today, and conscience echo the truth that something catastrophic has befallen man. Only the fall of man can account for the moral contradiction within him, as described in Romans 7:1-25. Why should Christians be so slow to believe this cardinal Biblical doctrine?

Second—Painting a vivid picture of God as a real, living, active person (The truth at the heart of Christianity) is another way the Old Testament makes us wise unto salvation. For example, the doctrine of prevailing prayer comes more thrillingly alive when we see God, as in the case of King Hezekiah, in his workshop so to speak, actually answering prayer (2 Kings 20:1-11). In this bit of inspired history, after he had, through Isaiah, told the king, who "was sick unto death" that he would die, God, because the king "wept sore" and prayed to live, answered: "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee... And I will add unto thy days fifteen years." And do we not still need to know that God punishes men "That say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil" (Zephaniah 1:12) "These things happened unto them by way of example: and they were written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). As "God is one," even so is his Bible also one.

We must never forget that the Bible as a whole furnishes, in principle, the way "completely unto every good work." The time, money, energy, and influence that Christians spend futilely trying to "save" the world by doing things in ways that God never asked them to use is something to think on. Good things, to be sure—things inevitably by-products of Christianity, would Christians but seek in faith first God's kingdom and his righteousness, according to the word and example of Christ and of Paul. To discover by experience that our small buckets grow in receiving capacity, and that our short ropes lengthen progressively, as we perpetually draw from the deep, living wells of infinite knowledge and wisdom in the Bible should ever lead us up to its author "beyond the sacred page."

Paul's Province

(Romans 15:22-28; 2 Corinthians 10:13-18) From Romans 15:14-33, Romans 16:1-27 to its close, Romans is largely personal—Paul and his friends. This does not mean, however, that the ending of the book is weak, or that it does not invite and reward serious study. This record of the fruits of the gospel in the life of Paul (and in the lives of scores of his friends) gives point to his frequent exhortations that Christians imitate him, and also makes an appropriate, practical, powerful close for the mighty doctrinal Treatise.

Apart from what is found in the book of Romans, little can be known about the founding and early history of the church in Rome. Possibly, some "sojourners from Rome" (Acts 2:10) became Christians at Pentecost; and upon returning home, of course took the church with them. In any event, by the time Romans was written some 25 years after Pentecost, a good, strong church, which Paul had in vain longed to visit for many years, existed there. Among the 24 men and women, whom Paul salutes by name in Romans 16:1-27 as dear friends known elsewhere, are some of his "kinsmen... who are of note among the apostles." Others are saluted as tireless, proficient Christian workers, whom we know from other Scriptures to be just such Christians. We are not surprised, therefore, at Paul's writing: "And I myself also am persuaded, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another."

Since such commendation might seem to make his writing Rome at all, needless and presumptuous, Paul explains that God chose him as "A minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles" at large, and that he feels obligated to stir up their sincere minds by putting them in remembrance as long as he lives. The Corinthian Letters make it plain that Paul's envious, malicious foes in Corinth, thinking to get rid of him, tauntingly said that he had no right to be in Corinth at all—that his wide evangelistic travels were too ambitious for a man of his caliber. Seemingly the slander was known at Rome also. 2 Corinthians 10:13-18 and Romans 15:22-28, in which he boldly asserts that the world is his "province," and that he does not "stretch... overmuch" his commission and right in the broadest reaches of his labors and successes, is his nobly Christian answer.

"Oh how the angels would rejoice if 10,000 men who preach for established and settled churches would gather up their belongings and go to some place where the gospel is unknown!" (Reuel Lemmons in the Firm Foundation, July 3, 1956).

Questions

Prove by the Scriptures that the Bible as a unit is a perfect compend of God's complete will for men, and that it was written for our learning.

Show that the writings of the Old Testament help prepare men, by teaching them their desperate need of Christ, to accept him as their Savior.

What evidence outside the Bible itself supports the cardinal Biblical doctrine that man without divine intervention is hopelessly lost?

How does the story of Hezekiah prove a truth that lies at the root of Christianity, namely, that God is a real, living, acting Person?

How is it to be accounted for that, though Christians are completely equipped in the church to do every good work, they sometimes do their good works in ways not furnished in the church?

What are the nature and value of Romans from Romans 15:14-33, Romans 16:1-27?

Why does Paul feel the need to justify his world-wide gospel labors, and his visit to the strong, capable church in Rome?

04.46. LESSON 46

LESSON 46 In his 'introduction to Romans (Romans 1:8-15), Paul told the church that he had longed, prayed "unceasingly," and "oftentimes purposed" to visit them that he might have some fruit in them "also, as in the rest of the Gentiles," but that he had been "hindered hitherto." Now, in his program as outlined here in chapter 15, he, keenly conscious that by divine appointment the whole Gentile world is his "province," says that, since his work in East Europe is done, he is ready for a tour of West Europe, which affords an occasion for both the long-anticipated visit and their having fellowship with him when he goes on into Spain. In his language, "That I should be a minister of Christ unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit," Paul paints a faithful, beautiful picture not only of the nature of the Christian ministry in general, but also of the deeply religious nature of his apostleship to the Gentiles in particular. He sees himself as an officiating priest, who by preaching the gospel to the Gentiles leads them to offer themselves up as sacrifices to God, the Holy Spirit being the sanctifying Person. In other words, at his preaching and their believing, the Holy Spirit descends upon them to enable them to become living sacrifices to be consumed for God's glory upon the altar of love and service.

Inasmuch as Paul's lifetime work among the Gentiles is at last opening up in the West, why does he take a long, perilous journey to the East? Why does he collect money from Gentile churches for poor saints in Jerusalem? There existed in the church a party of Jewish zealots that was destroying the unity and universality of the church. Hence, "That the truth of the gospel might continue" (Galatians 2:5), Paul hopes by a brotherly exchange of "spiritual" and "carnal" things between Jewish and Gentile Christians to guide them both into realizing that Christ created "In himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross" (Ephesians 2:15-16). The Power and Mystery of Prayer From Paul's writings and the book of Acts, we know that the Jews (even many Christians) were so suspicious of him that he was forced, repeatedly, to defend his apostolic authority. Nothing but utter devotion to Christ and passionate love for his kinsmen after the flesh could have induced him to visit Jerusalem again. That he went "bound in the spirit" with grim forebodings of what might befall him there is revealed in the address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:1-38), which he made on his way to Jerusalem soon after Romans was written. This is the background of his earnest plea: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints" (Romans 15:30-31). What could better portray the Jewish bitterness against Paul, and the crucial discord in the church than the fact that Jewish Christians, though in distress, might refuse relief which he brought from Gentile Christians?

Note the earnestness of this prayer. "Strive" implies agonizing wrestling with a strong, determined foe. Just so, prayer to God is prayer against Satan, "the strong man" who must be bound (Christ)—must be strangled, else he "sure will strangle thee." The world is currently concerned

about the importance of Air Power in warfare. One may be uncertain about this question, but Paul has no doubt, in the war of the church with "the prince of the powers of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)—"powers" composed of "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" and "world-rulers of this darkness"—with his "tares" and "wiles," that the "Air Force" of "All prayer and supplication," since it gives effectiveness to the whole Christian armor, is the decisive power in the war. (See Ephesians 6:10-18.)

Prayer, a great, blessed mystery and fact, taps the power of almighty God. There is nothing in radio and television that approaches its space-bridging wonder and usefulness. The wonder and power of prayer, however, in making wishes come true has nothing in common with Aladdin rubbing his magic lamp and ring as in oriental fable, or with overweening occidental Sciences. Rather, God's integrating and humanly inscrutable economy of prayer, unspeakably, blesses Christians by having them contribute to the answering of their own prayers, which makes them fellow-workers with God in the destiny of both themselves and of the world. The Indispensability of Prayer

Some say that the two things for which Paul in such deep-toned earnestness and sincerity asks the co-prayers of the church in Rome are not fit subjects for prayer—that such mundane things lie wholly within the realm of human responsibility and activity. But to Paul, what concerns the church concerns Christ, because they are one, even as a man's head and body are one. He makes no nice distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" things for Christians, but believing and "continuing steadfastly in prayer," he practices as he preaches, "Let your requests be made known to God," as naturally and confidently as a child in need goes to its mother. As Christ, who said, "This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer" (Mark 9:29), and as the earlier apostles, who named prayer before preaching (Acts 6:4), made prayer indispensable, so does Paul make prayer indispensable.

Probably, Paul could pray a prayer that Fenelon, a French churchman, wrote about 250 years ago better than its author could, or than we can. The prayer reads: "O Father, give to thy child that which he knows not how to ask. I dare not ask either for crosses or for consolations. Behold, my need which I know not myself. See and do according to thy tender mercies. Smite or heal; depress me or raise me up. I adore thy purposes without knowing them. I am silent; I yield myself to thee; I would have no other desire than to accomplish thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray thyself in me. (See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.)

How real, near, and dear God, Christ, and Spirit, whom Paul links together in this prayer, all are to Paul and his brethren! How good and usable to hear him extol the God of "Patience... Comfort... Hope... Peace" as he does in this chapter, which is so full of the frowning situation that confronts him, and of the huge burden that weights him down. Is not he pattern saint as well as chosen apostle?

Questions

Explain Paul's figure of his being a priest, offering up the Gentiles as a sacrifice to God.

What psychology was involved in moving Paul, when his heart was set on the West, to spend so much time, labor, and travel on Jerusalem in the East?

What is the background of the agony of earnestness in prayer which Paul begs his brethren in Rome to share with him?

How is it that prayer to God is prayer against Satan?

Is there any analogy between prayer and radio, television, and the Air Power in carnal warfare?

Cite a case of Christ's making prayer indispensable, and a case of his making it the alternative of fainting.

What do you think of Fenelon's prayer?

04.47. LESSON 47

LESSON 47 In Romans 15:1-33, Paul states his lifetime purpose as follows: "Making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build on another man's foundation." His journey to Jerusalem, as we have seen, was tributary to this purpose. Christ's words to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings," kept him loyally waging a broad, uncompromising war against the usurping "God of this world... Satan, the deceiver of the whole world," Christ's inveterate enemy.

Alongside this great, Godlike purpose, Paul, knowing the inadequacy of human power for this superhuman task, names the divine power that came to strengthen him: "Christ wrought through me... for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:18 with its context ascribes the miracles that attended and confirmed Christianity in its beginning to the power of the "Holy Trinity." All that God and Christ had previously contributed to the making of Christianity united in the Spirit on Pentecost with a burst of power, so that, since then, "The power of the Holy Spirit" is the power of Father, Son, and Spirit. Instead of coming in place of God and Christ, the Spirit brings them to men. This accords with Christ's instructions to his apostles: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come... he shall glorify me... All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13-15). In the divine economy, both in nature (Genesis 1:1-3) and in religion, the power of the Godhead comes to a perfected focus in the Holy Spirit.

Inasmuch as Paul has already prayed (Romans 15:13) that "The God of hope" might fill the Christians in Rome with "All joy and peace... (and) hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit," the power that sustains, as well as the power that makes, Christians is "The power of the Holy Spirit." The one God, who gives men justification through His Son, dwells in justified men through his re-creating, sanctifying Spirit (Romans 15:16). "For through him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have our access in one Spirit unto the Father... builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:18-22). There is but one line of approach for men to God, always through Christ, the Spirit, and the word—the word for instruction, Christ for justification, and the Spirit for sanctifying power. The Holy Spirit did not exhaust himself in his incidental, inaugural miracles, for he is eternal, unwasting God, Christ, and Spirit integrated, and at work saving the lost, through the instrumentality of the word. God is no more limited to miracles in religion than he is in nature. The Spirit and the Church

Christ told his disciples that God would "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13). He also taught: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). When John wrote his book many years later, he explains: "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believeth on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Christ was not glorified." Christ promised the Spirit to every believer.

After his resurrection, a few days before his ascension and glorification, Christ in preparation for the fulfillment of this promise, charged his apostles not to leave Jerusalem until God's promise, through him that they should be "baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence," thus becoming "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), was fulfilled. He concluded the charge: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:4-8).

How "the eternal Spirit," "the Holy Spirit of promise," was "poured forth" by the glorified Christ, and how the apostles "were all filled with the Holy Spirit" and "clothed with power from on high," is recorded in Acts 2:1-47. The common idea that the resurrection of Christ supplied the new power found in the apostles and the church after Pentecost does not satisfy readers of the inspired records. Weeks after his resurrection, but days before his glorification, Christ told his waiting, expectant apostles that they could receive the prerequisite, promised power when the Spirit came. It is scriptural to associate enabling power with the Spirit, prevenient grace with God, and vicarious suffering with Christ. That the church of God and of Christ began as a church with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is no more certain than that, when the church began, the Holy Spirit took up his residence in it, as "the house of God." The two supreme gifts, age-lasting gifts, to the church were forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Peter is soon speaking of "The Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32), as his permanent co-witness.

Since only men "full of the Holy Spirit" could "serve tables," Stephen, "A man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" was chosen for this work (Acts 6:2-5). Barnabas, "A good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24), was soon prominent in the church. Later, Gentile Christians in distant Pisidia were "filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). Faith, joy, and the Holy Spirit dwelt together in these early Christians. As men believed and obeyed the gospel, joy and the Spirit entered into them, as inevitable workings of the gospel; the gospel was made to work this way. Consequently, to be filled with the Spirit and to go on their "way rejoicing" were the normal experiences of all Christians. In view of this fact, and the additional fact that Christ promised the Spirit to every believer, why are many Christians today joyless and doubtful of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence? Really, do you know why?

Paul Lived in the Power of the Spirit

Romans 15:1-133 is full of the Holy Spirit. Twice, the expression, "In the power of the Holy Spirit," occurs; once, the Spirit is named as the Sanctifier of converts, and once, as the Inspirer of love among brethren (Romans 15:30). Paul teaches in this chapter that his rich, dynamic life was lived in the power of the Holy Spirit; that the Spirit permeated and energized him, "spirit and soul and body," for God's work.

Questions

Explain how it is that instead of coming in place of God and Christ, the Holy Spirit brings both God and Christ to men.

Study: The one God who gives men justification through his Son, dwells in justified men through his recreating, sanctifying Spirit.

Cite a Scripture in which Christ promised the Spirit to every believer, and another in which he told the apostles they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came. When and how were these promises fulfilled?

Verify: It is scriptural to associate prevenient grace with God, vicarious suffering with Christ, and enabling power with the Holy Spirit.

Consider: There is but one line of approach for men to God, always through Christ, the Spirit, and the word—the word for instruction, Christ for justification, and the Spirit for sanctification.

Name two age-lasting gifts which were given to the church on Pentecost.

Does Paul teach in Romans 15:1-33 that the Holy Spirit is the power that both makes and sustains Christians, and that his own rich, dynamic life was lived "in the power of the Holy Spirit"?

04.48. LESSON 48

LESSON 48

Christ told Paul at his conversion that he would be "Filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). After a sketchy record of the first years of Paul's Christian life, a much fuller record begins when the Holy Spirit starts him on his particular mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2). As he began this world-wide work, Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit," draws, with military brevity and finality, the indelible line of battle between Christ and the usurping Devil for the possession of the world, a line across which no fraternizing of the contending armies can be, in his forthright assault upon Elymas the sorcerer: "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:8-12).

Need readers of Paul be reminded that he himself repeatedly affirms that he lived, labored, suffered, rejoiced, and faced death "In the power of the Holy Spirit?" or that he repeatedly admonishes his converts: "Be filled with the Spirit," "Quench not the Spirit," "Grieve not the Holy Spirit... which dwelleth in us," and reject not God, who giveth the Holy Spirit to us" (1 Thessalonians 4:8). This earnest admonishing shows that Christians have a responsibility in the matter.

Paul's Repentance To compare the powerful, hopeful Paul of Romans 15:1-33 with the powerless, hopeless Paul, who cried in helpless despair, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death" in Romans 7:1-25, before he experienced the power of "God in the Spirit" as set forth in Romans 8:1-39, throws light on the nature of repentance. The earlier heroic, but overpowered Paul is the natural man at his best before he gets power beyond his own to strengthen him in the fierce, unequal duel with "the flesh." Does not this Paul suggest a great electric locomotive, ready to go, except the power to make it go. No more is power the crux in machinery than is power the crux in Christian men.

Men who have not learned that Adam's despoiled race has lost both the power to do right and the power to refrain from doing wrong, as Paul learned it, have made poor use of Biblical and secular history, and of their personal experience. Furthermore, men who knew that they have lost this power must also know that it cannot be recovered by human power—that it is "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). The central, living power that makes Christianity go is God Himself, who meets the universal, imperative human need of power "With power through his spirit in the inward man" (Ephesians 3:16). Apart from God in Christ, no Justification; apart from God in the Spirit, no "Sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord." It takes Chris-Vanity in totality to re-create fallen man with his dis-organized, fatally twisted personality. The finishing touch of the awful picture that Paul paints of the church in the "grievous times" of the last days is: "Holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). This Scripture is the faithful portrayal of the church, dead because it holds Christian forms, empty of the indwelling power of "God in the Spirit."

Paul's writings show his profound insight into the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament, which is full of man's inability to live when he is out of gear with God. Probably he poured over the book of Job with its supreme doctrine that the Creator accepts only men who know their creatural limitation and failure. Job was the best man on earth (Job 1:8), but he was proud of his goodness, and ready in touchy pride, even unto the disparagement of God, to de-fend his good name before men—in short, he was man-centered, and claimed human merit. "He was righteous In his own eyes... and justified himself rather than God" (Job 32:1-3). He had to learn that he was but a creature—even a fallen creature. After God asked him some eighty questions, none of which he could answer, or was expected -co answer, though he had been contending "That he would maintain the right of a man with God" (Job 16:21), he contritely confessed: "I have uttered that which I understood not... wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6-9). The Old Testament is brimming with essential religious truth. In the book of Job, a man by faith climbs up to God through inexplicable suffering. In Ecclesiastes, a man by sight tumbles down into unrelieved gloom and emptiness. Neither the best man nor the wisest of men can direct his steps. Job's sin was spiritual pride and self-righteousness; Solomon's sin was fleshly pride and self-indulgence. Pride! the ruin of angels and men! The drama of Job, perhaps God's first written message to man, certainly should help Paul and all other men to know their eternal condemnation in Adam, if left to themselves (Romans 5:12-21). When Job repented, he cried: "I abhor myself." At last, realizing man's intellectual ignorance and moral corruption before God, Job lost his confidence in man, as man. After his trust in human wisdom and righteousness was punctured, "Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning," and restored his possessions twofold. Men's giving God His rightful place conditions them to receive His "latter-end" blessings. Repentance requires fallen, rejected men to turn, not only from their personal sins, but also from what they are by birth. "That which is horn of flesh is flesh... Ye must be born anew" (Christ). "Repentance unto salvation" plows much deeper than mere surface reformation.

Paul, repenting as Job repented, abhorred himself. Declaring that he had "no confidence in the flesh," he repudiated all fleshly values, counting them but "refuse" that he "might gain Christ" (Php 3:2-11). Inasmuch as no man can serve two masters, Paul had to die unto self before he could "live unto God." He puts it: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:19-20). This means that Paul had to put his fleshly self out to make room for Christ to come in, take over, and express Himself through Paul's regenerated personality. Paul learned the secret of how to ask God for the Holy Spirit, whom Christ says God gives to them that ask Him. (Luke 11:13). As water flows naturally and freely into irrigable gardens, so the Holy Spirit flows religiously and freely into penitent, congenial human spirits.

Paul preached "Both to Jews and Gentiles repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). Until men cease refusing God His prerogatives and repent toward Him, they cannot believe in His Christ. And they cannot repent toward God until they, with Job and Paul, abhor themselves, and "repent in dust and ashes."

Questions

By what power did Paul in Acts 13:8-12 draw the indelible line of battle between God and Satan for the dominion of the world?

Does not Paul's exhorting Christians to "be filled with the Spirit" and to "grieve not the Holy Spirit" that dwelt in them show that a Christian is to blame if he "bath not the Spirit"?

Is not the lack of "power through his (God's) Spirit in the inward man" the fatal deficiency of the baffled Christian in Romans 7:1-25?

Is not man as a child of Adam alive to sin and dead to righteousness? What evidence apart from the Bible supports this thesis?

Name the living, central Power that makes and keeps Christians.

Should not the books of Job and Ecclesiastes have helped Paul to see that gospel repentance requires fallen, reprobate men to turn away from not only their personal sins, but also from what they are by birth?

Where is the Scripture that portrays the church, dead because it clings to dead, Christian forms and customs, empty of the indwelling Power of "God in the Spirit"?

04.49. LESSON 49

LESSON 49

Throughout the Bible, "God is one." This eternal Oneness of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit was taught by Christ so plainly and earnestly that the Jews said he blasphemed. God, Christ, and the Spirit interweave their redemptive workings over the centuries until they culminate and focus "In the power of the Holy Spirit" on Pentecost into a working unit—the church.

Workings of the "Trinity" in justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying men are as inseparable as are the working of light, heat, and energy of the sun in making grass. To use a simpler comparison, as the power of steering wheel, transmission gears, and wheels are integrated to run cars, so the power of Father, Son and Spirit is integrated to save sinners. The constituent parts in such cases, not named, are implied. For example, to make Paul's "Christ in you, the hope of glory," read, "God, Christ, and the Spirit in you, the hope of glory," is but to state Paul's gospel more fully, not to alter it. "Christ in you" is therefore, also "The Spirit in you." To remember that the expressions, "The Spirit," "The Spirit of God," and "The Spirit of Christ" are all three used in one verse (Romans 8:9) to designate the Holy Spirit is helpful in studying the question of the Spirit.

"The Mysteries of the Kingdom" (Christ) With Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, "Unto the Father... that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith," with his reminder to the Corinthians, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you," and with many more Scriptures to the same effect, all Christians surely believe, in some sense at least, that the Holy Spirit dwells in them. A common reaction to this truth however, is doubt that the Holy Spirit himself actually dwells in us, because we do not see how he can do so. Are not we who "Walk by faith, not by sight" inconsistent in demanding to understand God's mode of working? In nature, we make no such demand. Does not this reaction take the matter out of the realm of faith? Christianity begins with "Great is the mystery of godliness" and continues with Christians "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Timothy 3:9-16). Christians believe that "God is a Spirit," and that, as he says, "Not by might... but by my Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6) his works are performed. They refuse to regard what they do not understand as ultimately inexplicable. They cannot believe that God, were he unable to dwell in them without violating their basic moral nature, would mock them by telling them that he can do so. All this is but simple elementary Christian faith.

All attempts to explain such mysteries as how God's foreknowledge leaves man free to choose, or as how spirits can mix and commune with each other without losing their individuality, are inadequate, for none of them probe to the kernel of the matter. Moreover, since the benefits of God in religion depend no more on man's understanding the process involved than they do in nature, such vain attempts are quite uncalled for. But worse, do they not signify a mistrustful heart? If such mysteries, uninvited and unwelcome, intrude and disturb us, to remember that God reminded Job, by a long list of questions that he could not answer, of his creatural limitations and pride in order to set him in his place, repenting, should bring us to our knees, repenting and

seeking more faith. Should not baffling animal instinct, astounding workings of our minds, including their complex reflex and deep subconscious activities, and the insoluble mystery of the origin and growth of our own spirits so fragiley dwelling in us to be dismissed at last by grisly death against our struggling wills—should not these mysteries, and many, very many, more (the speaking of Balaam's ass and Saul's interview with Samuel, brought up from "the gulph of death," to name two) condition us to accept by faith that on Pentecost Christ "poured forth" his Spirit, and has continued to infuse his Spirit into the spirits of his own ever since? Does not the spiritual likeness and affinity between God and man, made in God's image, make this, at least, not impossible and incredible? Christ's prayer for Christians, "That they all may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us... I in them, and thou in me, that they may all be perfected into one" (John 17:1-26), is not to be explained, thank God, just simply believed and used. Did not Adam's companionship with God in Eden, similarly to the instinct of animals possibly, keep him from all sin and error? Is not Christianity God's way to break man's rebel spirit and bring him back to the original life-preserving fellowship with himself, again guided and guarded by his wisdom and power? Is an unfinished, pre-Pentecostal Christianity before the Spirit was given equal to the super-human task of re-creating a dead humanity? Would God plan and work from all eternity past to give his Spirit to Christians who would not need him? The Holy Spirit himself pleads with Christians not to resist, grieve, and do despite unto him. Did not Paul's honest response to these pleadings, and his unreserved surrender to Christ account for his, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me," and for his superlatively powerful life? Who knows to what depths the Spirit by his writings and prayers in unutterable groanings for us may not yet permeate, impregnate, and vitalize our spirits, if we but present them, all stops open, for his harmonizing, enabling deep workings, "according to the power that worketh in us?" How much of our Laodicean lukewarmness is due to our failure to let God use the power he has provided for our strengthening?

"Through Faith" In his prayer that the Ephesians might be strengthened through the power of the Spirit in the inward man, and that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, Paul reveals the practical "how" of God indwelling Christians. It is through and according to their faith. By his question, "Receiveth ye the Spirit by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith," he reminds the Galatians that they got the Spirit by believing the gospel, just as they got the remission of their sins—no miracle, no magic, no burglarizing invasion of their personality. God's workings are so perfected that his supernatural unites with his natural without a discernible joint. Everything God does for Christians must ever be in conjunction and agreement with his word—never contrary.

Questions

Does to make Paul's "Christ in you, the hope of glory," read, "God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in you, the hope of glory," alter Christian doctrine?

Do men need to understand the mode of God's workings in religion, any more than they do in nature, to receive his benefits?

Is it true that Christians refuse to regard what they do not understand as being basically inexplicable?

May not the mystery of animal instinct, and many more mysteries, throw suggestive, analogous light upon the mystery of God's Spirit permeating and strengthening man's spirit?

Is Christ's prayer that Christians may all be one, having him in them as God is in him and he in God, to be intellectually understood?

Is it reasonable to think that God would plan and work from all eternity past to give his Spirit to Christians who would not need such Power?

Think on: No restraint, except what the lack of faith imposes, is to be put upon the word and promise of God through Christ in the Spirit.

04.50. LESSON 50

LESSON 50

While it is not essential to the working of the "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" that men know how he performs his work, it is essential, if they are to reap the fruits of his religious workings, that they know how to cooperate with him, and that they chose to do so. This basic knowledge, which God is kind enough to vouchsafe in his Word, is that, from start to finish, men must humbly trust, wholly obey, and actually depend upon him for wisdom and power—belief, obedience, and dependence are the key words. Only the triune God dwelling in men can heal their inherently dislocated, depraved nature. What relief, gratitude, and hope that fumbling, ineffectual man may resign to him who is willing and able all responsibility for both means and results! A sufficient answer to unbelievers who say that this robs Christians of incentive, ambition and energy, and makes life colorless and unchallenging—in a word, depersonalizes them—is Paul himself. Within three days at Damascus, Paul passed through a form of death and resurrection which so identified him with Christ that Christ lived in him and express himself through him, thus supplementing Paul's natural powers. Instead of his natural powers being suppressed, they were, with Paul's eager cooperation of course, geared into divine power, and strengthened, heightened, and made effective so that Paul was no longer unable to do what he willed and struggled desperately to do (Romans 7:19).

Though Paul did not understand all about how God worked in him, he knew that God did, and left the making of his life in God's hands. Paul, having "no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3), relinquished the antichristian, fleshly struggle after sanctification, as he had relinquished such struggling after justification. This alert passivity toward God filled him with both "all the fullness of God." as he prayed the Ephesians might be, and with all activity toward men.

Paul's own, oft-repeated explanation of his deep, constitutional change was that Christ "In the power of the Holy Spirit" lived in him, and gave him strength beyond his own, according to his need. The Spirit never did anything for, in, or through Paul, however, against his will and effort. We need not fear that God will make us more fruitful socially, or better personally—less worldly, more liberal givers, or more devout worshippers—than we both will and work to be. As electricity flows through a wire into things not insulated, so the Holy Spirit flows through faith into spiritual men, for they are not insulated by the flesh. This involves the New birth "of water and the Spirit," which Christ in an interview with Nicodemus makes an indispensable condition of entrance into the kingdom of God. Christ explained to Nicodemus, who was puzzled about "how" he could be born again, that, since the "how" of the birth was as independent of direct human power and control as was the "how" of the wind, he must leave it to God (John 3:3-12). The creation of the "new man" (Ephesians 2:15), as was the creation of Adam, is the work of God. Nicodemus' part was as simple and down to earth, however, as was setting a sail to use the mysterious wind to run his boat. At the set time for establishing the kingdom, the glorified Christ sent the Spirit to preside over its inauguration. When believers on that occasion (Pentecost) asked for directions, the Spirit

replied: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Beginning then, to all who are "born of water and the Spirit" into his family (kingdom or church), because this is the way to ask him for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), God gives, as a birthright, the indwelling, family Spirit, "Crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6).

Men who received the word of the Spirit on Pentecost were "Born of water and the Spirit." If Nicodemus was among them, he had consented to let God do a work in him (Php 2:13), which he could neither do for himself nor understand (not expected to do so) after God did it. Should this unconditional surrender to God seem difficult to men otherwise irrevocably lost? Have men today who have not obeyed the Pentecostal word of the Spirit been born into the kingdom?

Eternal Life Did not Adam's creation in God's likeness include, so long as he was loyal to God, eternal life? In his fall away from God, he lost eternal life, but not eternal existence. Christ said to the Jews: "Work not for the bread that perisheth, but for the bread which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed." Again, "He that believeth hath eternal life" (John 6:27-47). 1 John 5:11-12 adds: "The witness is this that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath the life: he that hath not the Son, hath not the life." Mankind is thus divided into two mutually exclusive classes: men with eternal life, and men with merely eternal existence—spiritual men and fleshly men. In his talk with Nicodemus, Christ recognizes these two classes of men, and calls the process which restores eternal life to eternally existing men of Adam's fallen posterity, that they may come into the kingdom of God and again possess real life—"The life which is life indeed" (1 Timothy 6:19)—a New Birth. He tells Nicodemus that instead of man's merely making the application of a moral lesson which he has learned, in this birth God imparts his own, eternal, personal life to men who are dead through trespasses and sins, without God and hope in the world (Ephesians 2:1-12), as in fleshly birth a father imparts his fleshly life. Clearly, each of these births, as does the wind, requires superhuman, "heavenly things."

Eternal, spiritual life for men, both before and after death, is life lived in relation to eternal, spiritual realities, as fleshly life is life in relation to temporal, fleshly shadows. Unregenerated men live dominated by the flesh. When they are regenerated, they begin again to live eternal lives dominated by the Spirit, such as Adam lived before he fell. Eternal life is to be thought of rather as life above death, hence untouched by death, than as life after death. If Adam lost original eternal life through sin, restored eternal life may be lost again through sin. Our present Christian life is the life of God himself restored to us in Christ. Of course it survives death. In speaking of his own probable death, Paul says that it would be "gain" to him, for, after death, he would enjoy fuller fellowship with Christ than was possible on earth (Php 1:21-23). This view of human life as one eternal piece, which the incident of death does not disrupt, gives Christianity an unspeakable worth, power, and appeal above all other religions to a dead, hopeless world. Even the body is discarded but temporarily, for, when the Lord comes, it shall be raised from the tomb a spiritual body.

Questions

Though men need not know how God works in them, what knowledge do they need? What are, on a human level, the three key words of Christianity?

Does not Paul's own life refute the slander that Christianity cheapens life, even unto depersonalizing Christians?

Consider: As electricity flows through a wire into things not insulated, so the Holy Spirit flows through faith into spiritual men because they are not insulated by the flesh.

Why was the bewilderment of Nicodemus about the New Birth idle and wholly unnecessary?

Study: To all who are "born of water and the Spirit" into his family, God gives, because this is the divinely appointed way to ask for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), the indwelling, abiding family Spirit, "crying, Abba, Father."

Differentiate between eternal life and eternal existence. When and how did the race of men lose eternal life? When and how was it restored?

What is the unique Christian view of human life—all one eternal piece which death does not disrupt—capable of doing for a dead world?

04.51. LESSON 51

LESSON 51

"Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21). Here is a glimpse of the lure distant places held for Paul about the time he wrote Romans, some three years before he went to Rome as a prisoner. Though often seemingly dead, yet three living years packed full of unpredictable pivotal, dramatic adventure, "Passing strange... by flood and field." Were Paul's Prayers Answered?

Paul besought his brethren in Rome to pray with him for two things: that the Jewish saints might accept the Gentile offering, and that he might be delivered from disobedient men in Judea (Romans 15:31). His visit to Rome is so linked with these petitions that it is virtually a third petition. Were these petitions granted? The narrative in Acts 21:1-40, Acts 22:1-30, Acts 23:1-35 implies that the gift was accepted, and tells the story of Paul's deliverance from disobedient men and voyage to Rome. Note that the prayer does not contemplate Christian's exercising their independent wills to shape the future and to direct their own lives, but that all things are referred to the overruling, sovereign "will of God" (James 4:13-15).

After the Jews with murderous intent dragged Paul out of the Temple, the Romans rescued and held him prisoner in Palestine two years. After this delay, Paul despairing of trial there appealed to Caesar, and was taken as a prisoner in chains to Rome, where his imprisonment continued another two years. In his writing during this latter period, Paul interprets these seemingly barren years as follows: "These things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear" (Php 1:12-14) If God's intervention, though delaying, probably cancelling, his long-cherished plan of evangelizing the West, and though subjecting him to extreme shame and failure, but increase the harvest of souls, Paul, no matter what happens to him personally, is grateful and cooperative. Would not any other reaction mean that he repudiated the fundamental doctrine of God's infallible providence, and raise the searching question of the reality of his conversion, loyalty and devotion to God at all?

According to the book of Acts, many things occurred during Paul's imprisonment in Palestine and voyage to Rome that seemed to blast all hope of his prayers ever being answered, or of his ever seeing Rome. But the disobedient, stubborn Jews have been thwarted, and he is in Rome! As he views it all with Christian insight and hindsight, he sees divine purpose and overruling providence threaded through his many perils, sad delays, bitter disappointments, and crushed hopes. The removal of a single woof would spoil the whole tapestry. In his own perfect, inscrutable way, God has answered his prayers, and given him Caesar's large bodyguard (some 10,000 men) and household, and "all the rest" as an undreamed of, ideal radiating center from which to sound out the gospel to the whole Roman world—the very method of spreading Christianity which he has

preferred and used for many years. Foresight? Though his future is very uncertain, Paul feels no foreboding anxiety. If his long-delayed trial results in his death, he will go to be with Christ which is indeed "very far better" (Php 1:23). In this manner, he interprets the, humanly speaking, whole tragic story, and, as Joseph said to his brothers, he says to all apparent opposition, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." Men of God learn to see that the free, eternal, personal God is the prime Cause, central Pivot, and final Arbiter of all history; hence second causes do not upset them. They do not fluctuate with the ups and downs of personal or racial life. Paul never writes about doing the best he can "under the circumstances," for he is always on top of circumstances.

Most probably Paul's long incarceration ended in his acquittal, and a few more years of freedom. Did he go to Spain? We can never know, at least in this world, but, to his everlasting praise, he started. "Low aim, not failure, is crime." Lack of spiritual vision and Christian purpose in us must grieve God and Christ and the Spirit most deeply. A second arrest and trial ended in Paul's execution. During an interval between two stages of this trial, apparently, he wrote his "Swan Song:" "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come... At my first defense, no man took my part, but all forsook me... But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be the glory for ever and ever" (2 Timothy 4:1-22). With this, compare what Martin Luther wrote shortly before his death: "Aged, worn out, weary, spiritless, and now almost blind in one eye, I long for a little rest and quietness. I am weary of the world and the world is weary of me." Of all men, surely, Paul best answers Christ's prayer that his disciples be neither overcome by the world nor taken out of it until their work is done (John 17:15). In Paul, more than in others, do the reality and nearness of the gracious Father, the greatness of life, and the meaning of death stand demonstrated. Who ever got so much out of Christ as did Paul? He took no "trek into the shadows." We can but bless God for moving him to write his Christian autobiography that we and our children may learn to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Christ does not get old and weak, and Christians who live upon him, as they profess to do in the Lord's Supper, need not. As on each successive floor when one ascends to the top of some lofty building the horizon is wider, the sunlight brighter, and distant objects clearer and nearer, life should be to Christians. To them, life is not a landlocked lake enclosed by a shore line of a few years.

Paul's prayers were more than answered, because he simply and honestly made his requests to God and left Him really free to make changes which would better enable him to answer according to his own infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. He actually prayed in the name of Christ, for he had no desires and made no prayers that Christ could not countersign. Is it not astounding to see Christians and their families living lives that involve "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life," even as worldlings do, yet saying that they are following God because they have "prayed" for guidance? What does this lack of taking the name of God in vain, and of being blasphemous?

Questions

Sate the two petitions of Paul's prayer, and observe that Paul leaves the disposition of all things to the sovereign will and providence of God.

Relate the facts of Paul's life as a Roman prisoner, and give his own interpretation of these puzzling years.

Had Paul been unhappy about the wreck of his cherished plans, what would it have revealed about his faith in God, and how would it have affected his work to convert others to a Christ who brought to him no peace and happiness?

Why do not Christians fluctuate with the ups and downs of life and get upset by second causes, even as the rest of men do, but remain hopeful and serene?

Apply the saying, "Low aim, not failure, is crime," to Paul, and tell how he compares with other men to whom the saying is applied.

In the light of Paul's life comment upon a Christian's insight, hindsight, and foresight. Did Paul think that his prayers were answered?

What did Paul himself have to do with God's being able to more than answer his prayers?

04.52. LESSON 52

LESSON 52 In Romans 16:1-27, Paul heartily commends Phoebe, a sister who is going to Rome probably taking this Epistle, and, associating with him eight brethren, sends warm greetings to four groups of saints and twenty-six individuals, whom he has known elsewhere—eighteen men and eight women. He calls the names of thirty-two people, and characterizes many of them by particularizing, incisive phrases, fragrant with memories of closest associations. Should one wonder how Paul with so many heavy responsibilities, labors, and sorrows of his own can see, remember, and graciously wish to tell so many details, the answer is that Christ creates in Christians an unselfish interest in others.

These lively, interesting men and women constitute a cross section of the early church over the sprawling Roman Empire. Here is a little world of faith, love, work, suffering, and endurance, significantly coming at the close of the Book as a sample of the harvest from the seed sown in the Epistle. These really converted Christians believe all the doctrine of Romans, commit it to life, and move, both physically and spiritually, over a wide field. Albeit they pass before us in such rapid file, they are a living monument of the abiding truth that the oneness, and consequent lovely, satisfying interrelationships of Christians spring from their common relationship to Christ, who shares his life with them all, and expresses himself through their surrendered personalities.

It should be a source of comfort and strength to some sisters to note that the several whom Paul commends for "much labor" and Phoebe, "A helper of many," are all, except Priscilla whose husband is named with her, women unassociated with men. Possibly by taking advantage of the circumstances that they are denied homes of their own, these good women make their espousal to Christ purer and more fruitful (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). If this is the case, do they not far more than compensate for their loss? Under no circumstances can Christians lose. It should be helpful to some Christian women of every generation to think on these women, and the evangelist Philip's "Four virgin daughters, who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). The Church and Satan In Romans 16:1-27, Paul uses the word "church" for the first time in Romans. The very fact that Paul, who is a master of order and government, finds no need for the word in his exhaustive treatment of all fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as universal human condemnation, Christian justification, sanctification, and glorification, should help us to understand what the church is, and to see that all ecclesiastical hierarchy and institutionalism are contrary to its essential nature. Inasmuch as giving the church of Christ a mechanical, legalized title contradicts both the letter and the spirit of Christianity, when Paul finally gets around to the term "Church of Christ," instead of intending to give the church a stereotyped name, he must be thinking of Christ's right, based upon its nature and stupendous cost to him, to own and use the church.

God imparts his own eternal life by means of spiritual birth to all who heed his call to repudiate and come out of the condemned world—man's choice and God's act. Men, thus rescued from eternal death and made partakers of the divine nature, compose Christ's "Church which is his body...the bride, the wife of the Lamb." The church is therefore a divine creation, which shares the life of

God, which Christ identified with himself as his body and bride, and which the Holy Spirit makes his residence—a profoundly spiritual relation of men with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word. The church is the company of men and women whom God adds together (Acts 2:47, margin), as they are justified by being buried with Christ in baptism, wherein they are also raised with him through faith in the working within them of the same mighty power of God that raised Christ from the dead (Colossians 2:12); adds them together for creative, sanctifying, maturing worship and work. Any other religious company added together by outer, human federation and organization into conformity and union is but Satan's cheap counterfeit (one of his tares) of the church with its inner, divine, organic unity and uniformity. Because of its divine nature the church is deeply and richly human. As Christ's physical body while he lived in it was his instrument of contact and service, so his spiritual body in which he now lives is his instrument for bodying himself forth to the world. By craftily beguiling and corrupting the church (2 Corinthians 11:3), Satan weakens the sole adversary of his unholy ambition for world-dominion. Were the church destroyed, he would be supreme "Prince of this world." Man cannot foresee the end of the cosmic struggle (Colossians 1:20) between God and Satan, who possesses superhuman knowledge, power, skill, and hate—"The deep things of Satan" (Revelation 2:24). But Paul's, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet," looking backward to God's promise in Eden to bruise the Serpents' head (Genesis 3:15) and forward to its perfect fulfillment in the Serpent's being "Cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... for ever" (Revelation 20:10), drives out all doubt about the final outcome and brings in "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

Peace and Doxology The manner in which Paul brings the bruising of Satan into this final admonition for the unity and peace of the church shows, I think, that he is clinching his teaching of the two preceding chapters, namely, that men in the church who cause trouble over secondary things—things about which Christians are as free to react one way as another, about which they must not contend for their own terms of peace—are tools of Satan, acting contrary to Christian doctrine, and are unworthy of fellowship. A church which is too small to allow freedom of conscience and wholesome co-existence of inevitable differences about such things is too small for "A habitation of God in the Spirit." In this connection, Paul teaches, as a precaution against the wiles of Satan, that there is a wisdom which keeps one ignorant of evil; that, on the principle that cleanliness best understands filth, one need not know sin by experience to be wise about it. The Book of Romans appropriately closes with a classic doxology: "Unto him that is able... the only wise God" (wisdom to contrive and power to effect the whole of Christianity) Paul ascribes glory forever. What is "The mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal," but is now made known in Paul's gospel? It is, that apart from the flesh-centered, carnal principle of law, apart from all fleshly distinctions and human merit, God in pure grace freely gives eternal life to all humanity on the principle of the "Obedience of faith."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

Questions

How do you account for the fact that Paul, active missionary, close student, and great author, had time and disposition for many most intimate friends?

What may we learn about the source of the many lovely interrelations of Christians from this roll of Paul and his friends?

Should the fact that Paul does not use the word "church" in Romans until he gets to the salutations help us to understand the nature of the church?

Does the statement that the church is a profoundly spiritual relation of men with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word help us to see what the church really is.

Why has Satan from the beginning desperately fought (and continues to fight) the church of Christ?

Do you think that Romans 16:17 emphasizes the doctrine of Romans 14, namely, that the church of God must be big enough to enfold brethren who differ about discretionary things?

God has ability and wisdom, according to the Doxology, to accomplish what end? What is the ancient, long-veiled mystery that Paul, especially, has at long last unveiled?

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