

THE ORIGINAL STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Ellet J. Waggoner



Introduction

It is quite common, in writing upon any book in the Bible, to spend some time on an "Introduction" to the book in question—setting forth the nature of it, the circumstances under which it was written, and the probable purpose of the writer, together with many other things, partly conjectural, and partly derived from the book itself. All such statements the reader has to take on the authority of the one making them, since, not having yet studied the book, he can not judge for himself. The best way is to introduce him at once to the study of the book, and then he will, if diligent and faithful, soon learn all that it has to reveal concerning itself. We learn more of a man by talking with him than by hearing somebody talk about him. So we will proceed at once to the study of the Epistle to the Galatians, and let it speak for itself.

Nothing can take the place of the Scriptures themselves. If all would study the Bible as prayerfully and as conscientiously as they ought, giving earnest heed to every word, and receiving it

as coming directly from God, there would be no need of any other religious book.

Whatever is written should be for the purpose of calling people's attention more sharply to the words of Scripture; whatever substitutes any man's opinions for the Bible, so that by it people are led to rest content without any further study of the Bible itself, is worse than useless. The reader is, therefore, most earnestly urged to study, first of all, the Scripture text very diligently and carefully, so that every reference to it will be a reference to a familiar acquaintance. May God grant that this little aid to the study of the Word may make every reader better acquainted with all Scripture, which is able to make him wise unto salvation.

E. J. Waggoner

Chapter 1

Paul, an apostle

Galatians 1:1-5

“Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead); and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia; grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The best introduction to the Bible is the Bible itself; so the only introduction necessary to this present study is to begin at once on the Epistle. One thing only would the writer say, and that is, Do not let these articles be considered as a substitute for the study of the Scripture itself. They are designed only as suggestive, to lead the student

into some of the glories revealed in the sacred text. The Epistle to the Galatians is short, and as but few verses will be covered in any one lesson, it is hoped that many will study the Scripture text so carefully that they will have the entire epistle well in their minds when the studies are ended. Then they will find themselves well equipped for a thorough study of the book, which they will feel that they have just begun. We will now proceed to read:—

Christ's Divinity

The very first verse shows the divinity of Christ. Paul declares himself to be an apostle “not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.” That is just as strong Bible proof of the divinity of Christ as is the statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1. It is true that this truth is stated incidentally, in Gal. 1:1, since the subject is Paul’s apostleship; but that simply shows how the fact of Christ’s divinity is the basis of all the Scriptures. They are not written to prove the

divinity of Christ; no, they are written for the benefit of men. Because Christ is divine, a thing which carries its own proof to every one who makes His acquaintance, the Scriptures point men to Him. He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

A Good Commission

An apostle is one who is sent. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, and of God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. He had good backing. A messenger's confidence is in proportion to the authority of the one who sends him, and to his confidence in that authority and power. Paul knew that he was sent by the Lord, and he knew that the power of God is the power that raises from the dead. Now “he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” John 3:34. Thus it was that Paul spoke with authority, and the words which he spoke were the commandments of God. 1 Cor. 14:37. So in reading this epistle, or any other in the Bible, we have not to make allowance for the writer's personal peculiarities and prejudices. It is true that each writer retains his

own personality; since God chooses different men to do different work solely on account of their different personality; but it is God's Word in all, and nothing need be taken off from the authority of the message, and set down to the score of natural bias or prejudice.

One Mind

In the writing of this epistle, we have an example of what the apostle in another epistle exhorts us all to be: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. 1:10. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, but all the brethren who were with him were concerned in it, because they were led by the same Spirit. While there can be no doubt as to the fact that all were united in agreeing with what Paul wrote, it may well be that the mention of the brethren refers specifically to the greeting. They all sent greeting. Of course the substance of

the epistle came direct from Paul's own heart and mind, prompted by the Holy Ghost.

Grace and Peace Be to You

This is the word of the Lord, let it be remembered, and therefore means more than man's word. The Lord does not deal in empty compliments. His word is substantial; it carries with it the thing which it names. God's word creates, and here we have the very form of the creative word.

God said, "Let there be light; and there was light," and so on through the whole creation, "He spake, and it was." So here, "Let there be grace and peace to you," and so it is. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Titus 2:11. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." John 14:27. "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord." Isa. 57:19. God has sent grace and peace, bringing righteousness and salvation to all men—even to you, whoever you are, and to me. When you read

this third verse of the first chapter of Galatians, do not read it as a sort of complimentary phrase,—as a mere passing salutation to open the real matter at hand,—but as the creative word that brings to you personally all the blessings of the peace of God, that passeth all understanding.

The Gift of Christ

This grace and peace come from Christ, “who gave Himself for our sins.” “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Eph. 4:7. But this grace is “the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. 2:1. Therefore when we are told that “unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” we know that it means that God Himself is given to every one of us. The fact that men live is an evidence that Christ has been given to them, for in Christ life, and the life is the light of men, and this life light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:4, 9. In Christ all things consist (Col. 1:17), and thus it is that, since God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all,”

He can not do otherwise than, but with Him, freely to “give us all things” (Rom. 8:32). “His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” 2 Peter 1:3. Christ has by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9), so that every man in the world has received the “unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15). “The grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many,” even to all; for “as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” Rom. 5:15, 18.

God in Christ

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” 2 Cor. 5:19. “When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.” Heb. 6:13. This oath of God was in Christ. Gal. 3:16, 17. So in the gift of Christ, God Himself is given, and “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.” Rom. 11:36. Christ is “the shining of the Father’s glory,

and the very impress of His substance, and upholds all things by the word of His power.” Heb. 1:3. Therefore, since the whole universe depends on Christ, it is evident that in giving Himself for our sins, the entire universe has been pledged to man’s salvation. Sometimes people think that they are too poor, and insignificant, and worthless to be saved; well, they may be poor and worthless, but the fact is, nevertheless, that when it comes to the matter of salvation, God counts a single soul equal in value to the universe. It would perish sooner than a single soul who trusts God’s word.

An Individual Gift

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. The love embraces the whole world, but it singles out each individual. Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for “every man.” Heb. 2:9. The whole of the gift of Christ is to each one personally. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

Eph. 4:7. Christ is not divided, any more than Paul was crucified for sinners. 1 Cor. 1:13. Some people seem to have the idea that as Christ was given for all the world, He has to be divided up among all the persons in the world, each one getting only a portion. Not so; every individual gets the whole of Christ. To illustrate: Christ is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness. But light is not divided among a crowd of people. If a room full of people be brilliantly lighted, each individual gets the benefit of all the light, just as much as tho he were alone in the room. So the life of Christ lights every man that comes into the world, and in every believing heart Christ dwells in all His fullness.

Our Sins Purchased

Christ “gave Himself for our sins.” That is to say, He bought them, and paid the price for them. This is a simple statement of fact; the language used is that commonly employed in referring to purchases. “How much did you give for it?” or, “How much do you want for it?” are frequent

questions. “I gave a guinea for it,” may be the reply. And when we hear a man say that he gave so much for a certain thing, what do we at once know?—We know that that thing belongs to him, because he has bought it. So when the Holy Spirit tells us that Christ gave Himself for our sins, what should we be equally sure of?—That He has bought our sins, and that they belong to Him, and not to us. They are ours no longer, and we have no right to them. Every time we sin we are robbing the Lord.

Deliverance

Christ has not only paid the price for our sins, but He has accepted the goods. He has taken the sins all on Himself. He “bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” 1 Peter 2:24. He bares the sins of the world. John 1:29, margin. “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2. He “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us,” and since He did not die in vain, He has delivered us. He has wrought deliverance for

every soul; whether all will accept it and rejoice in it, is in their own hands. He comes proclaiming “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Isa. 61:1. His commission was to “say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves.” Isa. 46:9. Herein is the comfort of the Gospel of salvation: The Lord has taken all our sin upon Himself, having purchased it, so that we do not need to bear it. It was for our sins,—yours and mine,—that He gave Himself. “Our sins” means not simply those things that we have done, but the evil things that we are accustomed to do. He has bought our wicked dispositions, so that we do not need to be burdened with them. The absence of sin is righteousness; therefore in purchasing and taking our sins, the Lord has given to us all the righteousness of God. It is much easier to bear than sin; why not accept and stand to the transaction?

“This Present Evil World”

He gave Himself for our sins, “that He might

deliver us from this present evil world.” The text indicates that our sins constitute “this present evil world.” Of course, for there is no evil in this world except our sins. This present evil world is composed of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” 1 John 2:15, 16. Christ said to the Father, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” John 17:15. Men and women have gone into cloisters and convents, and have lived in deserts and in caves as hermits, in order to be separate from the world, that is from “this present evil world;” but every one has found that the world went along. It was present, always present; they could not get rid of it, because it was within them. It is not our associates that cause us to sin, but the evil that is within us. No man can escape from this present evil world until he escapes from himself, and Christ gave Himself for our sins, to deliver us from ourselves. This He has done, and every soul can say, if he will, “O Lord, truly I am Thy servant, I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds.” Ps.

116:16. Having been delivered from himself, and realizing it, he can henceforth say, “Not I, but Christ.”

He Has Bought Us Too.—This follows from the fact that He has purchased our sins, to deliver us from ourselves. Our sins are part of ourselves; nay, they are the whole of us, for our natural lives are nothing but sin. Therefore, Christ could not buy our sins without buying us also. Of this fact we have many plain statements. He “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.” Titus 2:14. “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.” 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. “Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.” 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

The Question of Acceptance

This is forever settled by what we have already learned. Christ has bought us, together with our

sins, and has paid the price. Therefore there is no room for the question, “Will He accept us?” He has already accepted you. Why does a man buy an article at the shop?—Because he wants it. If he has paid the price for it, having examined it so as to know what he was buying, does the merchant worry lest he will not accept it?—Not at all; the merchant knows that it is his business to get the goods to the purchaser as soon as possible. And here there is no room for any one to object, “But I am so sinful and unworthy.” That makes no difference; a man will accept what he deliberately purchases, especially if he has paid a great price for it; and Christ “gave Himself for our sins.” There is nothing in the whole universe that God desires so much as us and all the sins we have. We have only to praise “the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” Eph. 1:6.

“Thy Will Be Done”

What has this petition to do with the text before us?—Very much. We have read of what a wonderful deliverance Jesus has purchased for us,

and now we read that all this is “according to the will of our God and Father.” “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” 1 Thess. 4:3. He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.” Eph. 1:11. God wills our salvation; if our will coincides with His, or, better still, if we accept His will as ours, nothing in the universe can hinder our salvation. Therefore we have only to pray from the heart, “Thy will be done.”

To God Be the Glory

Not simply, “To Him be glory,” as in the common version, but “To whom be the glory,” as in the Revision. “Thine is the kingdom; and the power, and the glory.” All glory is God’s, whether men acknowledge it or not. To give Him the glory is not to impart anything to Him, but to recognize a fact. We give Him the glory by acknowledging that His is the power. “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” Ps. 100:3. “Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength.” Ps. 96:7. Power and glory are the same, as we learn from Eph. 1:19, 20,

which tells us that Christ was raised from the dead by the exceeding greatness of God's power, and from Rom. 6:4, where we learn that "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Also when Jesus by His wondrous power had turned water to wine, we are told that in the performance of the miracle, He "manifested forth His glory." John 2:11. So when we say that to God is the glory, we are saying that the power is all from Him. We do not save ourselves, for we are "without strength." But God is the Almighty, and He can and does save. If we confess that all glory belongs to God, we shall not be indulging in vain-glorious imaginations or boastings, and then will God be glorified in us.

Thus we see a little of the comprehensiveness of Paul's salutation by the Spirit. Instead of being the mere compliments of the day, it embraces the whole Gospel of God's glorious grace. It presents to us man's need, God's willingness to save, and Jesus Christ as the power of God, by which deliverance is wrought. With such an introduction, what else can we expect to find in the epistle itself

than that it contains the Gospel in the clearest and most striking form that it is possible to state it? Even so shall we find it as we proceed in our study.

Chapter 2

Only One Gospel

Galatians 1:6-10

Having in our minds the opening words of the Epistle to the Galatians, we will proceed directly to the subject matter of it. The apostle at once comes to the point, saying:—

“I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from Him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different Gospel; which is not another Gospel; only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any Gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any Gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now persuading men, or God? or am I seeking to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ.” “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Gal. 1:6–12.

A careful consideration of exactly what is said in these first verses in Galatians, will save the

student much trouble and confusion later on. It is here that we learn the subject of the epistle. We saw last week that the introduction, the salutation, embraced the whole Gospel; surely such an introduction could lead to nothing else but a setting forth of the Gospel. In the verses that constitute this week's lesson, we find this emphasized. Let us study them closely.

Who Calls Men?

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:9. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,” etc. 1 Peter 5:10. “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts 2:39. Those that are near, and those that are afar off, include all that are in the world; therefore God calls everybody. Not all come, however. “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.” 1 Thess. 5:23, 24. It is God who calls men.

Separating from God

Since the Galatian brethren were separating from Him that had called them, and as God is the one who graciously calls men, it is evident that they were separating from God. Thus we see that it was no slight thing that called forth this epistle. Paul’s brethren were in mortal danger, and he could not spend time on compliments, but must needs get at once to the subject, and present it in as clear and direct terms as possible.

It may be well in passing to note an opinion that sometimes obtains on account of hasty reading, namely, that Paul referred to himself as the one who had called the Galatian brethren, and from whom they were removing. A little thought should convince anybody of the fallacy of this idea. First, consider the positive evidence, a little of which is already noted, that it is God who calls.

Remember also that it was Paul himself who said that the apostasy would be the result of men's seeking to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30), and he as the servant of Christ would be the last man to draw people to himself. It is true that God uses agents, of whom Paul was one, to call men, but it is God, nevertheless, that calls. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself;" we are ambassadors for Christ, so that now it is God beseeching men by us instead of by Christ, to be reconciled to Himself.

It is a small matter to be joined to or separated from men, but a matter of vital importance to be joined to God. Many seem to think that everything depends on being joined to this or that body of religious people; if they are only "members in good standing" in this or that church, they feel secure. But the only thing worth considering is, Am I joined to the Lord, and walking in His truth? If one is joined to the Lord, he will very soon find his place among God's people, for those who are not God's people will not have a zealous, consistent follower of God among them very long. See Isa.

66:5; John 9:22, 33, 34; 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 12. When Barnabas went to Antioch, he exhorted the brethren that with purpose of heart they would “cleave unto the Lord.” Acts 12:22, 23. That was all that was necessary. If we do that, we shall certainly be with God’s own people.

Another Gospel

The Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” Rom. 1:16. God Himself is the power, so that separation from God means separation from the Gospel of Christ, who is the power of God. Nothing can be called a Gospel unless it professes to give salvation. That which professes to offer nothing but death, can not be called a gospel. “Gospel” means “joyful news,” “good tidings,” and a promise of death does not answer that description. In order for any false doctrine to pass as the Gospel, it must pretend to be the way of life; otherwise it could not deceive men. It is evident, therefore, that the Galatians were being seduced from God, by something that promised them life and salvation. The question

consequently would be, “Which is the true Gospel? is it the one that Paul preached? or the one the other men set forth? Therefore we see that this epistle must be an emphatic presentation of the true Gospel as distinguished from every false gospel.

No Other Gospel

Just as Jesus Christ is the only power of God, and there is no other name than that of Jesus given among men whereby salvation can be obtained, so there can be only one Gospel. A sham is nothing. A mask is not a man. So this other gospel, to which the Galatian brethren were being enticed, was only a perverted gospel, a counterfeit, a sham, and no real gospel at all. Some versions give verses 6 and 7 thus: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed . . . unto another gospel, altho there is not any other.” Since there is no other gospel now, there never could have been any other, for God changes not. So the Gospel which Paul preached to the Galatians, as well as to the Corinthians,—“Jesus Christ and Him crucified,”—“was the Gospel that was preached by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and

Isaiah.

“Accursed”

If any man, or even an angel from heaven, should preach any other gospel than that which Paul preached, he would bring himself under a curse. There are not two standards of right and wrong. That which will bring a curse to-day would have produced the same result five thousand years ago. Thus we find that the way of salvation has been exactly the same in every age. The Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), and the prophets preached the Gospel (1 Peter 1:11, 12). But if the Gospel preached by them had been different from that preached by Paul, they would have been accursed.

But why should one be accursed for preaching a different gospel?—Because he is the means of fastening others in the curse “Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way.” Deut. 26:18. If this be so of the one who causes a physically blind man to stumble, how much more

must it apply to one who causes a soul to stumble to its eternal ruin! To delude people with a false hope of salvation,—to cause them to put their trust in that which can by no means deliver them,—what could possibly be more wicked? It is to lead people to build their house over the bottomless pit. Well might the apostle deliberately reiterate his anathema. And here again we see the gravity of the situation that called forth this epistle. The Galatians brethren, having been led astray by accursed teachers, were themselves in danger of damnation.

“An Angel from Heaven”

But is there any danger, any possibility, that an angel from heaven would preach any other than the one, true Gospel?—Most assuredly, altho it would not be an angel recently come from heaven. We read of “the angels that sinned” (2 Peter 2:4), and “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 6), and that the habitation from which they were cast was heaven. Rev. 12:7-9. Now “Satan himself is transformed into an angel

of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” 2 Cor. 11:14, 15. It is they who come professing to be the spirits of the departed, bringing messages fresh from the realms above (where the departed are not), and preaching invariably “another gospel” than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beware of them. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” 1 John 4:1. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isa. 8:20.

Not Men-Pleasers

The apostle Paul exhorts servants to be obedient to their “masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but with singleness of heart, fearing God.” Col. 3:22. How much more then should it apply to those who are preaching the Gospel! So Paul declares that he is not seeking to persuade, to conciliate, to gain the favor of, or to please men, but God. The Lord

alone is his Master. “We are ambassadors for Christ,” and this is true of every Christian to the extent of the ability that God has given him. The position of an ambassador was thus very concisely put by a daily paper, in connection with a circumstance that occurred about two years ago:—

The fundamental basis of the influence and authority of any ambassador is the universal knowledge that he personally is absolutely beyond the reach of praise or blame, of loss or gain, of reward or punishment, in the foreign country where he represents his own. To his sovereign alone, through an official channel, and to no other human being, may a diplomatist look for recompense or fear rebuke.

This is pre-eminently true of Christ’s ambassador. To Him, and to no human being, are they answerable. To please Him is their sole business. As soon as they seek to please men, they cease to serve Him.

Unbounded Freedom

“He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman.” 1 Cor. 7:22. Paul, “an ambassador in bonds” desired the prayers of his brethren, that utterance might be given him, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Eph. 6:19, 20. He who recognizes his relation to Christ as ambassador, is absolutely free. He need fear no man. Nay, it is impossible for him to fear man, since he knows the infinite power that sustains him. He can proclaim the Gospel as boldly before kings as before peasants. How can he fear kings, when he serves the King of kings? And if he does present his message in the presence of God and the angels, how can he fear the face of any man? Such holy boldness is worth untold worlds.

Not of Man

Paul declared that he did not receive the Gospel from any man, but that it came to him directly from Christ. In the account of his conversion (Acts

9:1-22; 22:10), we see that a man was sent to Paul with a message from the Lord; nevertheless, it is true that Paul did not receive the Gospel from man. If he had, then he would have been a servant of men. But as he was sent, not by any man, but Jesus Christ and God, who raised him from the dead (Gal. 1:1), so he carried only the message which the Lord Himself gave him. Note how he repeats that what he tells he received of the Lord. 1 Cor. 11:23; 1 Thess. 4:15. "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Cor. 14:37. That was the secret of his boldness. He had no doubts about his message, as he must have had if he had received it from man.

We may have this same confidence, and indeed must have it if we are Christ's servants. If we receive the Gospel from men, then we are not sure of our ground. Not but what God employs human agents, for the Gospel is committed to men, but, no matter whose form we see, no matter what man God uses, we must recognize God's voice, and receive the message fresh from Him, else we have no assurance of its correctness. We need not depend

on any man or any church to substantiate the Word of God, or for our knowledge that this or that is or is not His Word. “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abides in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” 1 John 2:20, 26, 27. Even tho a man has truth, and if he has received it through some man as the instrument of the Spirit, if he traces his reception of it to that man, or his mind runs to that man and to what he said, as assurance for what he holds, he has not yet the truth as he ought to have it. When a man recognizes the voice of God in a truth that he hears, and receives it as coming directly from the Lord, then it is his own, and he knows it for a certainty. He is then free from men.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Note that it is not simply a revelation from

Jesus Christ, but the “revelation of Jesus Christ.” It was not simply that Christ told Paul something, but that Christ Himself revealed Himself to Paul, and in him; and He is the truth. That this is what is meant here may be seen from verse 16, where we read that God revealed His Son in Paul, that he might preach Him among the heathen. So we read: “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” 1 John 5:20. The mystery of the Gospel is Christ in the believer, the hope of glory. Col. 1:25-27. Thus it is that every Christian not only may but must be as sure of the Gospel which he believes, and which he makes known to others, as the apostle Paul was. Thank God that He has not left us to follow “cunningly devised fables.”

Chapter 3

A Zealous Persecutor Arrested

Galatians 1:13-24

The two lessons already studied, embracing Gal. 1:1-12 have shown us the subject of the epistle and the gravity of the situation that called it forth. The epistle itself, we have seen, deals with nothing less than the whole Gospel, perfect and complete, namely, Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Redeemer, “mighty to save” from the evil of this present world. That which called for a clear, forcible, and direct statement of the Gospel, was the fact that some were perverting it, doing the accursed work of leading the Galatians brethren away from God and Christ, and causing them to rest in a false hope of salvation, which could end only in their destruction. As a contrast to the false gospel which the Galatians were receiving from men, the apostle assures them that the Gospel

which he preached did not come from men, but that he received it by the direct revelation of Jesus Christ. As proof of the statement that he was not indebted to any man for the Gospel, he proceeds, in the verses which follow, to give an outline of his history before and after he became a Christian. Read them in connection with the preceding portion of the chapter:—

“For ye have heard of my conversation [manner of life] in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it; and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen

days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the region of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ; But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me." Gal. 1:13–24.

“Concerning Zeal, Persecuting the Church”

This is what Paul said of himself, in his Epistle to the Philippians. How great his zeal was he himself tells in several places. In the text before us, we read that he persecuted the church of God “beyond measure,” and “wasted it,” or, as in the Revision, “made havoc of it.” Before Agrippa he said, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when

they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagog, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” Acts 26:9-11. In an address to the Jews in Jerusalem, who knew his life, he said, “I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.” Acts 22:4. This he did because, as the previous verse says, he was “zealous toward God.” So full of this sort of zeal was he that he breathed nothing but “threatenings and slaughter.” Acts 9:1.

It seems almost incredible that any one professing to worship the true God, can have such false ideas of Him as to suppose that He is pleased with that kind of service; yet Saul of Tarsus, one of the most bitter and relentless persecutors of Christians that ever lived, could say years afterward, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Acts 23:1. Altho kicking against the pricks (Acts 9:5), and endeavoring to silence the growing conviction that would force itself upon him as he witnessed the

patience of the Christians, and heard their dying testimonies to the truth, Saul was not willfully stifling the voice of conscience. On the contrary, he was striving to preserve a good conscience, and so deeply had he been indoctrinated with the Pharisaic traditions, that he felt sure that these inconvenient prickings must be the suggestions of an evil spirit, which he was in duty bound to suppress. So the prickings of the Spirit of God had for a time only led him to redouble his zeal against the Christians. Of all persons in the world, Saul, the self-righteous Pharisee, had no bias in favor of Christianity.

Paul's Profiting

Paul "profited," made advancement, "in the Jews' religion," above many of his equals, that is, those of his own age, among his countrymen. He had possessed every advantage that was possible to a Jewish youth. "An Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5), he was nevertheless a free born Roman citizen (Acts 22:26-28). Naturally quick and intelligent, he had enjoyed the instruction of

Gamaliel, one of the wisest doctors of the law, and had been “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.” Acts 22:3. After the “straitest sect” among the Jews, he lived a Pharisee, and was “a Pharisee of the Pharisees,” so that he was “more exceedingly zealous of the traditions” of the fathers than any others of his class. Grown to manhood, he had become a member of the great council among the Jews,—the Sanhedrim,—as is shown by the fact that he gave his vote (Acts 26:10, R.V.) when Christians were condemned to death. Added to this, he possessed the confidence of the high priest, who readily gave him letters of introduction to the rulers of all the synagogues throughout the land. He was, indeed, a rising young man, on whom the rulers of the Jews looked with pride and hope, believing that he would contribute much to the restoration of the Jewish nation and religion to their former greatness. There had been a promising future before Saul, from a worldly point of view; but what things were gain to him, those he counted loss for Christ, for whose sake he suffered the loss of all things. Phil. 3:7, 8. What caused this great

change?—Nothing less than the power of the everlasting love and patient forbearance of God.

“Separated unto the Gospel of God”

These are the words with which Paul described himself in the Epistle to the Romans, “Called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God.” Rom. 1:1. So here he says that God “separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace.” Gal. 1:15. That God chose Saul to be an apostle, before Saul himself had any thought that he should ever be even a Christian, is evident from the sacred narrative. On his way to Damascus, whither, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” he was proceeding with full authority to seize, bind, and drag to prison all Christians, both men and women, Saul was suddenly arrested, not by human hands, but by the overpowering glory of the Lord. Three days afterward the Lord said to Ananias, when sending him to give Saul his sight, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.” Acts 9:15. God arrested Saul in his mad career of persecution,

because He had chosen him to be an apostle. So we see that the pricks against which Saul had been kicking were the strivings of the Spirit to turn him to the work to which he had been called.

But how long before this had Saul been chosen to be the messenger of the Lord?—He himself tells us that he was separated from his mother's womb. From his birth Saul had been "separated unto the Gospel of God." This was no new thing. The work of Samson and of John the Baptist was laid out for them before they were born. See Judges 13:2-14; Luke 1:13-17. Jeremiah was chosen before his birth to be a prophet of God. Jer. 1:4, 5. Pharaoh, the haughty, defiant king of Egypt, had also been chosen to make the name of God known throughout all the earth (Ex. 9:15, 16, R.V.), but he refused to do it as the acknowledged servant of the Lord, and so the work had been accomplished through his obstinacy.

These things but remind us that chance does not rule in this world. It is as true of every soul of man born into this world, as it was of the

Thessalonians, that “God hath from the beginning chosen” them “to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” 1 Thess. 2:13. It rests with every one to make that calling and election sure. And he who “willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4, R.V.), has also appointed “to every man his work” (Mark 13:34). He who leaves not Himself without witness even in the inanimate creation (Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20), would fain have man, His highest earthly creation, willingly give such witness to Him as can be given only by human intelligence. All men are chosen to be witnesses for God, and to each is his labor appointed. All through life the Spirit is striving with every man, to induce him to allow himself to be used for the work to which God has called him. Only the judgment day will reveal what wonderful opportunities men have recklessly flung away. Saul, the violent persecutor, became the mighty apostle; who can imagine how much good might have been done by the men whose great power over their fellows has been exerted only for evil, if they had yielded to the influence of the Spirit? Not

every one can be a Paul; but the thought that each one, according to the ability that God has given him, is chosen and called of God to witness for Him, will, when once grasped, give to life a new meaning.

The Revelation of Christ

“When it pleased God, . . . to reveal His Son in me.” Note the exact words. The apostle does not say that it pleased God to reveal His Son to him but in Him. Moreover, he does not say that it pleased God to put His Son into him, but to reveal His Son in him. There is a great truth in this, which stands out very plainly in connection with some other texts.

Read the whole of Deuteronomy 30. There we see that two things were placed before the people for them to choose between, namely, life and good, and death and evil. This, together with the fact that they were exhorted to keep the commandments of God, shows that they had not yet attained to righteousness. Then in verses 11-14 we read that

the commandment is not far off so as to make it necessary for some one to bring it to them, in order that they might do it; “but the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.”

We see, therefore, that the Word is in the hearts of men before they do it, and that it is there in order that they may do it. But what is the Word?—Read John 1:1-14, where we learn that the Word is God, because the only-begotten Son of God. “And the Word was made flesh.” That this is what is meant in the passage just quoted in Deuteronomy, is seen from Rom. 10:6-9, where it is quoted, and the Word is plainly declared to be Christ. Christ, then, dwells in the heart, in the flesh, of every man, and has come thus near to all men in order that they may be made the righteousness of God. Most men are ignorant of this divine presence, and live as tho God were not, and that they were their own creators and preservers. But when the Spirit of truth brings a man to the knowledge of the truth, then Christ dwells in his heart, not as hitherto, unappreciated and unrecognized, but “by faith.”

Eph. 3:17. Then is Christ revealed in him, and he fulfils the divine purpose of showing forth the excellencies of Him that called him out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9. Only by such a revelation of Christ in a man can he preach Him among the heathen; with that revelation, his whole life is a Gospel sermon, even tho he does not utter discourses. So we see that the work of the human preacher is exactly the same as that of the heavens: to declare the glory of God (Ps. 19:1-5)—and it is to be done in the same manner.

Conferring with Flesh and Blood

“Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” This statement is made for the purpose of showing that the apostle had not got the Gospel at second hand. He saw Christ, and accepted Him; then he went to Arabia, and came back to Damascus; and not till three years after his conversion did he go up to Jerusalem, where he stayed only fifteen days, and saw only two of the apostles. Moreover, the brethren were afraid of

him, and would not at first believe that he was a disciple, so it is evident that he did not receive the Gospel from any man.

But there is much to learn from Paul's not conferring with flesh and blood. To be sure, he had no need to, since he had the Lord's own word; but such a course as his is by no means common. For instance, a man reads a thing in the Bible, and then must ask some other man's opinion before he dare believe it. If none of his friends believe it, he is fearful of accepting it. If his pastor, or some commentary explains the text away, then away it goes; flesh and blood gain the day against the Spirit and the Word.

Or, it may be that the commandment is so plain that there is no reasonable excuse for asking anybody what it means. Then the question is, "Can I afford to do it? will it not cost too much sacrifice?" The most dangerous flesh and blood that one can confer with is one's own. It is not enough to be independent of others; in matters of truth one needs to be independent of one's self.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Prov. 3:5. “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Prov. 28:26. When God speaks, the part of wisdom is to obey at once, without counsel even of one’s own heart. The Lord’s name is “Counsellor.” (Isa. 9:6) and He is “wonderful in counsel.” Hear Him.

Paul’s Visit to Arabia

In the record of Paul’s conversion, in Acts 9, we are told that as soon as he was baptized he began to preach in the synagogs, “proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him,” but, being let down over the wall by night in a basket, he escaped them, and came to Jerusalem.” Verses 22-26. If we had no other record than this, we should not know but that Paul spent all the time in Damascus until he returned to Jerusalem; but in Gal. 1:17-18 we learn how long a time those “many days” cover, and that in the three years Paul visited Arabia. Returning to Damascus from Arabia, he continued preaching, until his

earnestness and power called down on him the wrath of the Jews, and he was obliged to flee for his life. Yet in all this three years' preaching, Paul never saw any other apostle.

Paul's Miraculous Conversion

There is no question that Paul's conversion was a miracle; but so is every conversion. Men seem to think that Paul's conversion had something more of the miraculous in it than ordinary conversions; but the fact is that exactly the same elements entered into Paul's conversion as in all other conversions. It was more than ordinarily striking, to be sure, because Paul was a more than ordinarily hard case to deal with, and was called to, as he was fitted for, an extraordinary work. Paul saw the Lord, and thereby learned his own wretched condition; this at once humbled him, and he accepted the Lord. That was the whole of it, and it is the same thing that occurs in every conversion, although not necessarily with the same outward manifestations.

“But was it not marvelous that Paul should have been able at once to preach Christ so powerfully and convincingly?”—Indeed it was, as it is marvelous that any man can preach Christ. That anybody should be able to preach Christ in very truth, involves no less a mystery than Christ manifest in the flesh. But do not let anybody suppose that Paul got his knowledge instantaneously, without any study. Remember that he had all his life been a diligent student of the Scriptures. It was not an uncommon thing for a rabbi to be able to repeat the greater portion or the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures from memory; and we may be sure that Paul, who had made more advancement than any others of his age, was as familiar with the words of the Bible as an ordinary schoolboy is with the multiplication table. But his mind was blinded by the traditions of the fathers, which had been drilled into him at the same time. The blindness which came upon him when the light shone round him on the way to Damascus, was but a picture of the blindness of his mind; and the seeming scales that fell from his eyes when Ananias spoke to him, indicated the shining forth

of the Word within him, and the scattering of the darkness of tradition. Paul's case was very different from that of a new convert who has never read or studied the Bible.

The Persecutor Preaching

Compare the statements in Gal. 1:18-22 with Acts 9:26-30; 22:17-21. Circumstances rendered it impossible that Paul should get any teaching from the Jewish Christians. It was not necessary, to be sure, and it was so ordered that all could see that he was taught of God, and not of man. So for years after his conversion he was "unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed," or, "of which he made havoc." And they glorified God in him. That is what God designs shall be done in each one of us.

In view of the case of Saul of Tarsus, let no one look on any opposer of the Gospel as incorrigible. Those who make opposition are to be instructed

with meekness; for who knows but that God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth? One might have said of Paul: “He has had the light as clearly as any man can have it. He has had every opportunity; he not only heard the inspired testimony of Stephen, but he has heard the dying confessions of many martyrs; he is a hardened wretch, from whom it is useless to expect any good.” Yet that same Saul became the greatest preacher of the Gospel, even as he had been the most bitter persecutor. Is there a malignant opposer of the truth? Do not strive with him, and do not reproach him. Let him have all the bitterness and strife to himself, while you hold yourself to the Word of God and to prayer. It may not be long till God, who is now blasphemed, will be glorified in him.

Chapter 4

The Truth of the Gospel

Galatians 2:1-10

Before beginning the study of the second chapter of Galatians, read the first chapter again carefully. One must necessarily understand and have in mind the contents of chapter 1 in order to understand chapter 2, since the second is but a continuation of the first. There is no break in the narrative in passing from the first to the second chapter. We may summarize the first chapter thus:—

The salutation, in which the whole Gospel is included.

The reason for writing the epistle, which is found in the statement of the condition of the Galatians, namely, that they were departing from God to a perverted gospel, being led astray by some accursed teachers.

There is but one Gospel, namely, that which Paul preached.

That Gospel was given him, not by any man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ in him.

Lastly, a brief summary of Paul's former life, his conversion, and his experience during the first seventeen years of his Christian life, chiefly with reference to the fact that he was not in connection with any of the brethren, by whom he could have been biased. He was near to Damascus when the Lord met him; he conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia and returned to Damascus, and after three years went up to Jerusalem, where he stayed fifteen days, afterwards going into Syria and Cilicia, without getting acquainted with the churches in Judea. And so he continues the narrative:—

“Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I

laid before them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised; and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage; to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it makes no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person) they, I say, who were of repute, imparted nothing to me; but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the Gospel of uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel of the circumcision (for He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we

should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.” Gal. 2:1-10.

Visit to Jerusalem

“Fourteen years after,” following the natural course of the narrative, means fourteen years after the visit recorded in Gal. 1:18, which was three years after the apostle Paul’s conversion. The second visit, therefore, was seventeen years after his conversion, or about the year 51 A.D., which coincides with the time of the conference in Jerusalem, which is recorded in Acts 15. It is with that conference, and the things that led to it, and grew out of it, that the second chapter of Galatians deals. In reading this chapter, therefore, the fifteenth of Acts must be understood and borne in mind. Our study this week will thus necessarily be largely in Acts 15, of which Galatians 2 is merely an adjunct.

The New Gospel

In the first chapter of Galatians (verses 6, 7) we are told that some were troubling the brethren, by perverting the Gospel of Christ, presenting a false gospel, and pretending that it was the true Gospel. In Acts 15:1 we read that “certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved.” This, we see, was the other gospel, which was not another, since there is only one, but which was being palmed off upon the brethren as the true Gospel. That these men who brought this teaching professed to be preaching the Gospel, is evident from the fact that they professed to tell the people what they must do to be saved. Paul and Barnabas would not give any place to the new preaching, but withstood it, in order, as Paul tells the Galatians, “that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.” Gal. 2:5. Paul and Barnabas had “no small dissension and disputation with them.” Acts 15:2. So we see that the controversy was no insignificant one, but was between the real Gospel and a counterfeit. The

question was a vital one for the new believers, and has no less interest for us.

A Denial of Christ

A glance at the experience of the church at Antioch, to whom this new gospel was brought, will show that it did in the most direct manner deny the power of Christ to save. The Gospel was first brought to them by brethren who had been scattered by the persecution that arose on the death of Stephen. These brethren came to Antioch “preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” Acts 11:19-21. Then the apostles sent Barnabas to assist in the work; and he, “when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord.” Verses 22-24. Then Barnabas found Saul, and together they labored with the church in Antioch for more than a year. Verses 25, 26. There

were in the church prophets and teachers, and as they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost spoke to them, telling them to separate Barnabas and Saul to the work to which He had called them. Acts 13:1-3. So we see that the church there had had much experience in the things of God. They were acquainted with the Lord and with the voice of the Holy Spirit, who witnessed that they were children of God. And now after all this, these men said to them, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved.” That was as much as to say, “All your faith in Christ, and all the witness of the Spirit, are nothing without the sign of circumcision.” The sign of circumcision, without faith, was exalted above faith in Christ without any outward sign. The new gospel was a most direct assault upon the Gospel, and a flat denial of Christ.

“False Brethren”

It is no wonder that Paul styles those who presented this teaching, “false brethren,” who had, as the Danish strongly expresses it, “sneaked in.”

Gal. 2:4. To the Galatians he said of them, “There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ.” Gal. 1:7. The apostles and elders, in their letter to the churches, said of those men, “Certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls.” Acts 15:24. And they further added that they “gave no commandment” to them. Verse 24, R.V. That is to say, these teachers were “false brethren,” who were not recognized by the apostles as teachers, who were speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves. There have been many such since that time. So vicious was their work that the apostle said, “Let them be accursed.” They were deliberately seeking to undermine the Gospel of Christ, and thus to destroy the souls of the believers.

“The Sign of Circumcision”

These false brethren had said, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved.” Literally, “You have not power to be saved.” This put all the power of salvation in the

outward sign of circumcision. Paul declares, “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Gal. 5:6. Circumcision has no power, and uncircumcision has no power, but faith alone, working by love, is mighty to save. That which the false brethren wished to enforce was not real circumcision, for that is not outward, but in the heart, and consists solely in obedience to God’s law through faith. See Rom. 2:25-29; 4:7-11. Abraham was righteous by faith alone, was, in fact, really circumcised in heart “with the circumcision made without hands,” by the Spirit, before he received the outward mark, which was not real circumcision, but only served as a sign, a reminder to him that circumcision consists in worshiping God in the spirit, and having no confidence in the flesh. Rom. 4:2-11; Col. 2:10, 11; Phil. 3:3. So these Christians of Antioch, who had been converted from heathenism, just as Abraham was, and had received the Lord Jesus, were circumcised with the true circumcision. The “false brethren” wished them to give up the reality for the empty sign.

“The Flesh Profiteth Nothing”

Jesus said, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63. The people of Antioch and Galatia had trusted in Christ for salvation; now there were some who sought to induce them to trust in the flesh. They did not tell them that they were at liberty to sin. O, no; they told them that they must keep the law! Yes, they must do it themselves; they must make themselves righteous without Jesus Christ. For circumcision stood for the keeping of the law. Now the real circumcision was the law written in the heart by the Spirit, but the outward form, in which alone these “false brethren” wished the believers to trust, stood only for self-righteousness. The false brethren would have them circumcised for righteousness and salvation; but Peter said, “Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we believe to be saved.” Just as Paul wrote, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Rom. 10:10. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”
Rom. 14:23. Therefore, all the efforts of men to keep the law of God by their own power, no matter how earnest and sincere they are, result in nothing but imperfection—sin. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isa. 64:6.

“A Yoke of Bondage”

When the question came up in Jerusalem, Peter said to those who would have men seek to be justified by their own works, instead of by faith in Christ, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” Acts 15:10. This yoke was a yoke of bondage, as is shown by Paul’s words, that the “false brethren” sneaked in “to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” Gal. 2:4. Christ gives freedom from sin. His life is “the perfect law of liberty.” “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), but not freedom from it. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12), just because

it gives the knowledge of sin by condemning it. It is a guide-board, which points out the way, but does not carry us. It can tell us that we are out of the way; but Jesus Christ alone can make us walk in it; for He is the way. Sin is bondage. Prov. 5:22. Only those who keep the commandments of God are at liberty (Ps. 119:45), and they can be kept only by faith in Christ (Rom. 8:3, 4). Therefore, whoever induces people to trust in the law for righteousness, without Christ, simply puts a yoke upon them, and fastens them in bondage. When a man has been convicted by the law as a transgressor, and cast into prison, he can not be delivered from his chains by the law which holds him there. But that is no fault of the law; just because it is a good law, it can not say that a guilty man is innocent. So these Galatian brethren were being brought into bondage by men who were seeking to exalt the law of God by denying Him who gave it, and in whom alone its righteousness is found.

Why Paul Went Up to Jerusalem

The record in Acts says that it was determined at Antioch that Paul and Barnabas and some others should go up to Jerusalem about this matter. But Paul declares that he went up “by revelation.” Gal. 2:2. He did not go up to learn the truth of the Gospel, but to maintain it. He went, not to find out what was the Gospel, but to communicate the Gospel which he had preached among the heathen. Those who were chief in the conference “added nothing” to him. He had not been preaching for seventeen years that of which he stood in doubt. He knew whom he believed. He had not received the Gospel from any man, and he did not need to have any man’s testimony that it was genuine. When God has spoken, an endorsement by man is an impertinence.

The Gospel Not Magic

The great lesson taught by this experience, to which Paul referred the Galatians, is that there is no thing in this world that can confer grace and

righteousness upon men, and that there is nothing in this world that any man can do that will bring salvation. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and not the power of man. Any teaching that leads men to trust in any object, whether it be an image, a picture, or anything else, or to trust for salvation in any work or effort of their own, even tho that effort be directed toward the most praiseworthy object, is a perversion of the truth of the Gospel, a false gospel. There are in the church of Christ no “sacraments” that by some sort of magical working confer special grace on the receiver, but there are things that a man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who is thereby justified and saved, may do as an expression of his faith. The only thing in the world that has any efficacy in the way of salvation, is the life of God in Christ. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:8-10.

Chapter 5

Justified by the Faith of Christ

Galatians 2:6-16

Our last lesson covered the first ten verses of the second chapter of Galatians, but we did not particularly study the last portion of the section. Accordingly we shall begin our study this week with the sixth verse, in order to keep the connection.

“But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John,

who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we

have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Gal. 2:6-16.

Not in Doubt

Paul did not go up to Jerusalem in order to get a difficult point settled. He did not go up to the apostles and elders to find out whether he had been preaching the truth or error for seventeen years. Those who were leaders among the brethren “added nothing” to him. He had seen the Lord Jesus, and he knew whom he had believed (2 Tim. 1:12); and as he had not received the Gospel from any man (Gal. 1:11, 12), he did not need that any man should teach him what it is (1 John 2:26, 27). He went up because the Lord sent him. The Lord knew that the brethren in Jerusalem needed his testimony, and the new converts needed to know that those whom God sent spoke the same thing. They needed the assurance that as they had turned from many gods to the one God, the truth is one, and there is but one Gospel for all men.

No Monopoly of Truth

“Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man’s person.” There is no man or body of men on earth, that has a monopoly of truth,—a corner, so to speak, so that whoever wishes it must come to him. Truth is independent of men. Truth is of God, for Christ, who is the shining of His glory, and the very impress of His substance (Heb. 1:3), is the truth (John 14:6). Whoever gets the truth, must get it from God, and not from any man, just as Paul received the Gospel. God may and does use men as instruments, or channels, but He alone is the Giver. Every man on earth may be the possessor of just as much of the truth as he is willing to use, and no more. See John 7:17; 12:35, 36. He who would act the pope, thinking to hold a monopoly of the truth, and compel people to come to him for it, dealing it out here, and withholding it there, loses all the truth that he ever had, if he ever really had any. Truth and popery can not exist together; no pope, or man with a popish disposition, has the truth. As soon as

a man receives the truth, he ceases to be a pope. If the pope of Rome should get converted, and become a disciple of Christ, that very hour he would vacate the papal seat.

The Biggest Not Always the Best

Just as there is no man who has a monopoly of truth, so there are no places to which men must necessarily go in order to find it. The brethren in Antioch did not need to go to Jerusalem to learn the truth, or to find out if what they had was the genuine article. The fact that truth was first proclaimed in a certain place, does not prove that it can be found only there, or that it can be found there at all. In fact, the last places in the world to go to with the expectation of finding or learning truth, are the cities where the Gospel was preached in the first centuries after Christ, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Alexandria, etc. Paul did not go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him, but began at once to preach.

The Papacy arose in part in this way: It was

assumed that the places where the apostles, or some of them, had preached must have the truth in its purity, and that all men must take it from there. It was also assumed that the people of a city must know more of it than the people in the country or in a village. So, from all bishops being on an equality, as at the beginning, it soon came to pass that the “country bishops” (chorepiscopoi) were rated as secondary to those who officiated in the cities. Then, when that spirit crept in, of course the next step was necessarily a strife among the city bishops to see which one should be greatest; and the unholy struggle went on until Rome gained the coveted place of power.

But Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a place that was “little among the thousands of Judah” (Micah 5:2), and nearly all His life He lived in Nazareth, a little town of so poor repute that a man in whom there was no guile said, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” John 1:45-47. Afterward Jesus took up His abode in the wealthy city of Capernaum, but was always known as “Jesus of Nazareth.” It is no farther to heaven from the

smallest village or even the smallest lonely cabin on the plain, than it is from the largest city, or bishop's palace. And God, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit. Isa. 57:15.

It Is God That Works

"He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles." The Word of God is living and active. Heb. 4:12, R.V. Whatever activity there is in the work of the Gospel, if there is any work done, is all of God. Jesus "went about doing good; . . . for God was with Him." Acts 10:38. He Himself said, "I can of Mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." John 15:10. So Peter spoke of Him as "a Man approved of God . . . by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him." Acts 2:22. The disciple is not greater than his Lord. Paul and Barnabas, therefore, at the meeting in Jerusalem, told "what

miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” Acts 15:12. Paul declared that he labored to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; . . . striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.” Col. 1:28, 29. This same power it is the privilege of the humblest believer to possess; “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:13.

Recognizing the Gift

The brethren in Jerusalem showed their connection with God by recognizing the grace that was given to Paul and Barnabas. When Barnabas first went to Antioch, and saw the grace of God that was working there, he “was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 11:21-24. The other apostles perceived that God had chosen Paul for a special work among the Gentiles, and they gave to him the right hand of fellowship, only requesting that he would remember the poor among his own

nation, and this he had already shown his willingness to do. Acts 11:27-30. So Paul and Barnabas returned to their work.

Withstanding Peter

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” We need not magnify nor dwell upon the mistakes of Peter or any other good man, because that is not profitable for us; but we must note this overwhelming proof that Peter was never considered the “prince of the apostles,” and that he never was, or considered himself to be, pope. Fancy any priest, bishop, or cardinal, withstanding Leo XIII. to the face in a public assembly. He would be considered extremely fortunate if the papal guards allowed him to escape with his life for thus presuming to oppose the “vicar of the Son of God.” But Peter made a mistake, and that upon a vital matter of doctrine, because he was not infallible, and meekly accepted the rebuke that Paul gave him, like the sincere, humble Christian that he was. Infallibility is not the portion of any

man; and the greatest man in the church of Christ has no lordship over the weakest. “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”

Making a Difference.

“When Peter was at the conference in Jerusalem, he told the facts about the receiving of the Gospel by the Gentiles, at his mouth, saying, “God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:8, 9. God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles in the matter of the purification of the heart, because, knowing the hearts, He knew that “there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” so that there is no other way than for all to be “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Rom. 3:22-24. But after having been shown this fact by the Lord; after having preached to the Gentiles and after having witnessed the gift of the Holy Ghost to them, the same as to Jewish

believers; after having eaten with them, and faithfully defended his course; after having given a clear testimony in conference that God made no difference between Jews and Gentiles; and even immediately after himself making no difference, Peter suddenly, as soon as some came who he thought would not approve of such freedom, began to make a difference. “He withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.” This was, as Paul says, dissimulation, and was not only wrong in itself, but was calculated to confuse and mislead the disciples.

Contrary to the Truth of the Gospel

A wave of fear seems to have passed over the Jewish believers, for “the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” This in itself was, of course, not walking “uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel;” but the mere fact of dissembling was not the whole of the offense against the truth of the Gospel. Under the

circumstances it was a public denial of Christ, just as much as that of which Peter had once before, through sudden fear, been guilty. We have all been too often guilty of the same sin to permit us to sit in judgment; we can only note the fact, and the natural consequence, as a warning to ourselves.

See how the action of Peter and the others was a virtual of Christ, altho unintentional. There had just been a great controversy over the question of circumcision. It was a question of justification and salvation,—whether men were saved by faith alone in Christ, or by outward forms. Clear testimony had been borne that salvation is by faith alone, but now, while the controversy is still alive, while the “false brethren” are still propagating their errors, these loyal brethren suddenly discriminated against the Gentile believers, because they were uncircumcised, in effect saying to them, “Except ye be circumcised, ye can not be saved.” Their actions said, “We also are in doubt about the power of faith in Christ alone to save men; we really believe that salvation depends on circumcision and the works of the law.” Such a denial of the truth of

the Gospel Paul could not stand, and he at once struck directly at the root of the matter.

“Sinners of the Gentiles,” and of the Jews

“If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Paul said to Peter, “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.” Did he mean that they, being Jews, were, therefore, not sinners?—By no means, for he immediately adds that they had believed on Jesus Christ for justification. They were sinners of the Jews, and not sinners of the Gentiles; but whatever things they had to boast of as Jews, all had to be counted loss for the sake of Christ. Nothing availed them anything except faith in Christ; and since this was so, it was evident that

the Gentile sinners could be saved directly by faith in Christ, without going through the dead forms which had been of no service to the Jews.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” 1 Tim. 1:15. “All have sinned,” and stand alike guilty before God; but all, of whatever race or class, can accept this saying, “This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” A circumcised sinner is no better than an uncircumcised one; a sinner who stands as a church member, is no better than one who is outside. The sinner who has gone through the form of baptism is no better than the sinner who has never made any profession of religion. Sin is sin, and sinners are sinners, whether in the church or out; but, thank God, Christ is the propitiation for our sins, as well as for the sins of the whole world. There is hope for the unfaithful professor of religion, as well as for the one who has never named the name of Christ.

“Justified”

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, . . . we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified,” says the apostle. The meaning of the word “justified” is made righteous. In an accommodated sense we use the term “justified” of a man who has not done wrong in a thing whereof he is accused. But, strictly speaking, such an one needs no justification, since he is already just; his righteous deed justified him. But since all have sinned, there are none just or righteous before God; therefore they need to be justified, or made righteous, which God does. Now the law of God is righteousness. See Rom. 7:12; 9:30, 31; Ps. 119:172. Therefore Paul did not disparage the law, altho he declared that no man could be made righteous by the law. No; so highly did he appreciate the law, that he believed in Christ for the righteousness which the law demands but can not give. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:3, 4.

“The Faith of Christ”

Much is lost in reading the Scriptures by not noting exactly what they say. Here we have literally, “the faith of Christ,” just as in Rev. 14:12 we have “the faith of Jesus.” He is the Author and Finisher of faith. Heb. 12:2. God has “dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3), in giving Christ to every man. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17): and Christ is the Word. All things are of God. It is He who gives repentance and forgiveness of sins.

There is, therefore, no opportunity for any one to plead that his faith is weak. He may not have accepted and made use of the gift, but there is no such thing as “weak faith.” A man may be “weak in faith,” that is, may be afraid to depend on faith, but faith itself is as strong as the Word of God.

There is no faith but the faith of Christ; everything else professing to be faith is a spurious article.

Here is comfort. Whoever will accept the faith of Jesus, has that which is as sure to work righteousness in him, and to save him, as the victory of Christ over sin and death is assured. He gives to us His own tried and approved faith. It has not a flaw, and we need not fear to use it; it will not fail us in any contest. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” Eph. 2:8. We are saved by nothing less than God’s unchangeable Word, and by Christ’s own personal confidence in that Word. We are not exhorted to try to do as well as He did, or to try to exercise as much faith as He had, but simply to take His faith, and let it work by love, and purify the heart.

Believing Is Receiving

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12. That is, as

many as believed on His name received Him. To believe on His name is to believe that He is the Son of God; to believe that He is the Son of God, means to believe that He is come in the flesh, in human flesh, in our flesh, for His name is “God with us;” so to believe on His name means simply to believe that He dwells personally in every man,—in all flesh. We do not make it so by believing it; it is so, whether we believe it or not; we simply accept the fact, which all nature reveals to us.

It follows, then, as a matter of course that, believing in Christ, we are justified by the faith of Christ, since we have Him personally dwelling in us, exercising His own faith. All power in heaven and earth is in His hands, and, recognizing this, we simply allow Him to exercise His own power in His own way.

Personal Experience

The reader will now see the object of Paul’s narrative. Instead of beginning with abstract

argument, to convince the Galatians of their error, he began with telling his own personal experience. That led him to tell what he said on another occasion, when some had erred concerning the faith. But all the time he is dealing with facts. He is telling what he knows, and the burden of the whole is personal acquaintance with Christ. The Gospel is no dead thing, no abstract doctrine, no “works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves” (Titus 3:5, R.V.), but a personal, acceptance of the personal Christ, who alone has power to work salvation. Christ as a living Saviour, always and everywhere present, always active and mighty to save, is the theme of the apostle’s letter from first to last, but especially in the portion now before us, and that which follows.

Chapter 6

The Ever-Present Cross

Galatians 2:17-21; 3:1

Our last lesson in Galatians, closing with verse 16 of the second chapter, showed us that men are saved only by faith in Christ, and that faith in Him is a personal matter. It is by “the faith of Christ,” His own personal faith, and no other, that we are justified; and this faith of Christ we get by receiving Christ Himself. Believing in Christ is receiving Him; and when Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and is thus recognized as Lord, He exercises the faith which alone is able to save; for

The Law Can Not Justify

“By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Gal. 2:16. Shall we say, “Then we will away with the law”? That is what every confirmed criminal thinks. Persistent law breakers would gladly do away with the law which declares them

guilty and will not say that wrong is right. But the law of God can not be abolished, for it is the statement of the will of God. Rom. 2:18. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. 7:12. We read the law, and find in it our duty made plain. But we have not done it; therefore we are guilty. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is none that does good; no, not one." Rom. 3:23, 12. Moreover, there is not one who has strength to do the law, its requirements are so great. Then it is very evident that no one can be justified by the works of the law, and it is equally evident that the fault is not in the law, but in the individual. Let the man get Christ in the heart by faith, and then the righteousness of the law will be there also, for Christ says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Ps. 40:8. He who would throw away the law because it will not call evil good, would reject God, because He "will by no means clear the guilty." Ex. 34:7. But God will remove the guilt, will make the sinners righteous, that is, in harmony with the law, and then the law which before condemned them will witness to their

righteousness.

Lesson for the Week

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” Gal. 2:17-21; 3:1.

What Was Destroyed?

“If I build up again those things which I

destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor.” R.V. We ask again, What was destroyed, the building up of which will prove us to be transgressors? Remembering that the apostle is talking of those who have believed in Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, we find the answer to the question in Rom. 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Also Col. 2:10, 11: “Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.” That which is destroyed is the body of sin, and it is destroyed only by this personal faith of Christ. It is destroyed in order that we may not serve sin. But now if, after having believed in Christ, we put our trust in something else, it is evident that that which was destroyed by faith is built up by lack of it, and so we are found transgressors through our own fault; for Christ is not the minister of sin, but of righteousness.

“Dead to the Law”

Many seem to fancy that “dead to the law” means the same as that the law is dead. Not by any means. The law must be in full force, else there could be no death to it. How does a man become dead to the law?—By receiving its full penalty, which is death. He is dead, but the law which put him to death is still as ready as ever to put to death another criminal. Suppose now that the man who was executed for gross crimes, should by some miraculous power come to life again, would he not still be dead to the law?—Certainly; nothing that he had done could be mentioned to him by the law; but if he should again commit crimes, the law would again execute him, but as another man. Now Paul says that he through the law is dead to the law, that he might live unto God. By the body of Christ he is raised from the death which he has suffered from the law because of his sin, and now he walks “in newness of life,” a life unto God. Like Saul of old, he is by the Spirit of God “turned into another man.” 1 Sam. 10:6. That this is the

case is shown by what follows.

Crucified with Christ

“I am crucified with Christ,” says Paul; “nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Christ was crucified; He was “delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” Rom. 4:25. But unless we are crucified with Him, His death and resurrection profit us nothing. If the cross of Christ is separated from us, and outside of us, even though it be but a moment of time and an hair’s breadth of space, it is to us all the same as if He were not crucified. No one was ever saved simply by looking forward to a cross to be erected and a Christ to be crucified at some indefinite time in the future, and no one can now be saved simply by believing that at a certain time in the past Christ was crucified. No; if men would see Christ crucified, they must look neither forward nor backward, but upward; for the arms of the cross that was erected on Calvary, reach from Paradise lost to Paradise restored, and cover the entire world. But let us note particularly in the

following paragraphs how it is that Christ must be crucified in every soul that derives any real benefit from the sacrifice.

Sin a Personal Matter

Christ was delivered for our offenses. He “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” 1 Peter 2:24. He bears the sins of the world. John 1:29. But every man is guilty only of the sins which he himself has committed. Now I do not sin where I am not, but where I am. Sin is in the heart of man: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within.” Mark 7:21-23. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Jer. 17:9. Others have sinned as well as I; but their sin is not mine, and I do not have to answer for it. What I need is freedom from my own personal sin,—that sin which not only has been committed by me personally, but which dwells in the heart,—

the sin which constitutes the whole of my life.

What I Can Not Do

I can not free myself from sin. “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” Prov. 5:22. “For tho thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord.” Jer. 2:22. My sin is committed by myself, in myself, and I can not separate it from me. Cast it on the Lord? Ah, yes, that is right, but how? Can I gather it up in my hands, and cast it from me, so that it will light upon Him?—I can not. If I could separate it but a hair’s breadth from me, then I should be safe, no matter what became of it, since it would not be found in me. In that case I could dispense with Christ; for if sin were not found on me, it would make no matter to me where it was found. I should be clear. But no works of any kind that I can do can save me; therefore, all my efforts to separate myself from my sins are unavailing.

Christ Bears the Sin in Us

It is evident from what has been said that whoever bears my sins must come where I am, yea, must come into me. And this is just what Christ does. Christ is the Word, and to all sinners, who would excuse themselves by saying that they can not know what God requires of them, He says, “The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.” Deut. 30:11-14. Therefore, He says, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Rom. 10:9. What shall we confess about the Lord Jesus?—Why, confess the truth, that He is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, and believe that He is there risen from the dead. “Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” Eph. 4:9. The risen Saviour is the crucified Saviour. So as Christ risen is in the heart of the sinner, so also is Christ crucified there. If it were not so, there would be no hope for any. A man may believe that Jesus

was crucified eighteen hundred years ago, and may die in his sins; but he who believes that Christ is crucified and risen in him, has salvation.

What a glorious thought that wherever sin is, there is Christ, the Saviour from sin! He bears sin, all sin, the sin of the world. Sin is in all flesh, and so Christ is come in the flesh. Christ is crucified in every man that lives on earth. This is the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation, which is to be proclaimed to all.

Living by Faith

In the tenth chapter of Romans, as already noted, we learn that Christ is in every man, “a very present help in trouble.” He is in the sinner, in order that the sinner may have every incentive and facility for turning from sin to righteousness. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6. There is no other life than His. He is the life. But, although He is in every man, not every man has His righteousness manifested in his life; for some “hold down the truth in unrighteousness.” Rom.

1:18, R.V. Now Paul's inspired prayer was that we might be strengthened with might by the Spirit of God in the inner man, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; ... that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Eph. 3:16-19. The difference, then, between the sinner and the Christian is this, that, whereas Christ crucified and risen is in every man, in the sinner He is there unrecognized and ignored, while in the Christian He dwells there by faith.

Christ is crucified in the sinner, for wherever there is sin and the curse, there is Christ bearing it. All that is needed now is for the sinner to be crucified with Christ, to let Christ's death be his own death, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal flesh. Faith in the eternal power and Divinity of God, that are seen in all the things that He has made, will enable any one to grasp this mystery. The seed is not quickened "except it die." 1 Cor. 15:36. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone; but if it die, it brings forth much fruit." John 12:24. So the one who is crucified with Christ,

begins at once to live, but it is as another man. “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

The Life of the World

“But Christ was actually crucified eighteen hundred years, and more, ago, was He not?”—Certainly. “Then how can it be that my personal sins were upon Him? or how can it be that I am now crucified with Him?” Well, it may be that we can not understand the fact, but that makes no difference with the fact. But when we remember that Christ is the life, even “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:2), we may understand something of it. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men,”—“the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:4, 9. The scene on Calvary was the manifestation of what has taken place as long as sin has existed, and will take place until every man is saved who is willing to be saved,—Christ bearing the sins of the world. He bears them now. One act of death and resurrection was sufficient for all time, for it is eternal life that

we are considering; therefore, it is not necessary for the sacrifice to be repeated. That life pervades and upholds all things, so that whoever accepts it by faith has all the benefit of the entire sacrifice of Christ. By Himself He “made purification of sins.” Whoever rejects the life, or is unwilling to acknowledge that the life which he has is Christ’s life, loses, of course, the benefit of the sacrifice.

The Faith of the Son of God

Christ lived by the Father. John 6:57. His faith in the word that God gave Him was such that He repeatedly and positively maintained that when He died He should rise again the third day. In this faith He died, saying, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” Luke 23:46. That faith which gave Him the victory over death (Heb. 5:7), because it gave Him the complete victory over sin, is the faith which He exercises in us, when He dwells in us by faith; for He is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” It is not we that live, but Christ that lives in us, and uses His own faith to deliver us from the power of Satan. “What have

we to do?”—Let Him live in us in His own way. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” How can we let Him? Simply by acknowledging Him, by confessing Him.

The Gift for Me

“Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” How personal this is. I am the one whom He loved. Each soul in the world can say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Leave Paul out of the question in reading this. Paul is dead, but the words that he wrote are yet alive. It was true of Paul, but no more so than of every other man. They are the words which the Spirit puts in our mouths, if we will but receive them. The whole gift of Christ is for each individual me. Christ is not divided, but every soul gets the whole of Him, just the same as if there were not another person in the world. Each one gets all the light that shines. The fact that there are millions of people for the sun to shine upon, does not make its light any the less for me; I get the full benefit of it, and could not get more if I were the only person in the world. It

shines for me. So Christ gave Himself for me, the same as if I were the only sinner in the world; and the same is true of every other sinner. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”

Christ Not Dead in Vain

“I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” If righteousness came by the law, then there would have been no use for the death of Christ. The law itself can do nothing except point out men’s duty; therefore to speak of righteousness coming by the law, means by our works, by our individual effort. So the text is equivalent to the statement that if we could save ourselves; Christ died for nothing; for salvation is the one thing to be gained. Well, we can not save ourselves; and Christ is not dead in vain; therefore there is salvation in Him. He is able to save all that come unto God by Him. Some must be saved, else He has died in vain. So the promise is sure: “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He

shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Isa. 53:10, 11. “Whosoever will” may be of the number. Since He died not in vain, see to it “that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.”

Christ Crucified before Us

“Who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?” R.V. The first part of the verse, concerning witchcraft, we shall leave until next week. What we are now concerned with is that Jesus was set forth before the Galatians, when Paul preached to them, as openly crucified before their eyes. So vivid was the presentation that they could actually see Christ crucified. It was not skilful word painting on the part of Paul, nor imagination on the part of the Galatians, for then it would have been only deception. No; it was an actual fact; Christ was there, crucified, before their eyes, and Paul by the Spirit enabled them to see Him. We know that it was not Paul’s skill in making beautiful word pictures that enabled them to fancy that they saw the crucifixion, for elsewhere Paul says that he

determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and that he purposely and carefully refrained from using the wisdom of words, for fear that he should make the cross of Christ without effect. 1 Cor. 1:17, 18; 2:1-4. Christ is crucified before us, and each blade of grass, each leaf in the forest, reveals the fact. Yea, we have the testimony in our own bodies. Many there are who can testify that it is something more than a figure of speech, when the apostle says that Christ was crucified before the eyes of the Galatians. They have had the experience. God grant that this study of Galatians, before it is finished, may be the means of opening the eyes of many more, so that they may see Christ crucified before their eyes, and know Him crucified in them and for them.

Chapter 7

The Blessing and the Curse

Galatians 3:1-10

The two chapters of Galatians that we have already studied give us sufficient idea of the entire book so that we can wholly take leave of the Galatian brethren, and consider the book as addressed solely to us. The circumstances that called forth the writing of the epistle were that the Galatians, having accepted the Gospel, were led astray by false teachers, who presented to them “another gospel,” that is, a counterfeit gospel, since there is but one for all time and for all men. The way it was presented to them was, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved.” Outward circumcision was given as a sign of righteousness which the individual already possessed by faith. Rom. 4:11. It was a sign that the law was written in the heart by the Spirit, and it was therefore, only a mockery and a sham when the law was transgressed. Rom. 2:25-29. But for

one to be circumcised in order to be saved, was to put his trust in works of his own and not in Christ. Now, altho there is in these days no question as to whether or not a man should submit to the specific rite of circumcision in order to be saved, the question of salvation itself, whether by human works or by Christ alone, and vital as ever.

Instead of attacking their error, and combating it with hard argument, the apostle begins with experience, the relation of which illustrates the case in hand. In this narrative, he has occasion to show that salvation is wholly by faith, for all men alike, and not in any degree by works. As Christ tasted death for every man, so every man who is saved must have Christ's personal experience of death and resurrection and life. Christ in the flesh does what the law could not do. Gal. 2:21; Rom. 8:3, 4. But that very fact witnesses to the righteousness of the law. If the law were at fault, Christ would not fulfill its demands. He shows its righteousness by fulfilling, or doing, what it demands, not simply for us, but in us. The grace of God in Christ attests the majesty and holiness of

the law. We do not frustrate the grace of God; if righteousness could come by the law, then would Christ be dead in vain. But to claim that the law could be abolished, or could relax its claims, and thus be of no account, is also to say that Christ is dead in vain. Let it be repeated: righteousness can not possibly come by the law, but only by the faith of Christ; but the fact that the righteousness of the law could be attained in no other way by us than by the crucifixion and resurrection and life of Christ in us, shows the infinite greatness and holiness of the law.

The Lesson for the Week

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore

that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Gal. 3:1–10.

It may be well to call attention to the fact that the words, “that ye should not obey the truth,” in the first verse, do not appear in the Revised Version. The thought is there, however, and since the same words are used in chapter 5:7, where the Revised Version also has them, we may well take them as they come in the ordinary version. The fact is, as learned in the first chapter, that departure

from the Gospel means departure from God. Now God is the God of truth; therefore departure from Him is disobedience to the truth.

The Sin of Witchcraft

The apostle asks those who are departing from God and His truth, “Who hath bewitched you?” “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” 1 Sam. 15:22, 23. If you look up this text in the Bible, you will see that in both instances the words “is as” are added. The literal Hebrew is, “Rebellion is the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is iniquity and idolatry.” And how so?—Plainly enough, since stubbornness and rebellion are rejection of God; and he who rejects God, puts himself under the control of evil spirits. All idolatry is devil worship. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils.” 1 Cor. 10:20. There is no middle ground. Christ says, “He that is not with Me is against Me.” Matt.12:30. That is, disobedience, rejection of the Lord, is the

spirit of antichrist.

The Safeguard against Spiritualism

Spiritualism is only another name for ancient witchcraft and soothsaying. It is a fraud, but not the kind of fraud that most people think it is. There is reality in it. It is a fraud in that, while it professes to receive communications from the spirits of the dead, it has communication only with the spirits of devils, since “the dead know not anything.” To be a Spiritualist medium is to give one’s self to the possession of demons. Now there is only one protection against this, and that is to hold fast to the Word of God. He who lightly regards God’s Word, severs himself from association with God, and puts himself within Satan’s influence. Even tho a man denounce Spiritualism in the strongest terms, if he does not hold to God’s Word, he will sooner or later be carried away by the strong delusion. Only by keeping the Word of Christ’s patience can men be kept from the temptation that is coming on all the world. Rev. 3:10. “The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”

(Eph. 2:2), is the spirit of Satan,—the spirit of antichrist,—and the Gospel of Christ, which reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16, 17), is the only possible salvation from it.

Christ Visibly Crucified

“Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified” before their eyes, said the apostle Paul, and he knew, for he first preached to them. But the experience of the Galatians was not peculiar to them. The cross of Christ is a present thing. The expression, “Come to the cross, is not a mere empty formula, but an invitation that can be literally complied with. Not until one has seen Christ crucified before his eyes, and until he can see the cross of Christ wherever he goes, does one know the reality of the Gospel. Let those scoff at this who will; the fact that a blind man can not see the sun, and denies that it shines, will not frighten any one who sees from talking about its glory. Our next lesson will deal more fully with this matter of the cross in all creation. But, accepting the fact on the apostle’s testimony, is it not marvelous that

those who had seen and accepted Christ crucified for them, could turn away from Him, to trust in their own works for salvation? Could it be anything less than witchcraft that could produce such a result?

Hold Fast the Beginning

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?” Foolish is but a feeble term for it. The man who has not power to begin a work, has strength to finish it! Impossible. Who has power to beget himself?—No one; we come into this world without having begotten ourselves; we are born without strength; and, therefore, all the strength that ever manifests itself in us, comes from another than ourselves. It is all given to us. The new-born babe is the representative of man. “A man is born into the world.” All the strength that any man has of himself is found in the infant as it utters its first cry with its first breath. Even so in things spiritual. “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth.” James 1:18. We can no more live righteous

lives by our own strength than we could beget ourselves. The work that is begun by the Spirit, must be carried to completion by the Spirit. “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” Heb. 3:14. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6. And He alone can do it.

Experience in the Gospel

“Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” These questions show that the experience of the Galatian brethren had been as deep and as real as would be expected from those before whose eyes Christ was openly crucified. The Spirit had been given to them, miracles had been wrought among them, and even by them, for the gifts of the Spirit accompany the gift of the Spirit; and as the result of this living Gospel among them, they had suffered persecution; for “all that will

live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Tim. 3:12. This makes the case the more serious. Having shared the sufferings of Christ, they were now departing from Him; and this departure from Christ, through whom alone righteousness can come, was marked by disobedience to the law of truth. They were insensibly but inevitably transgressing the law to which they were looking for salvation.

“Children of Abraham”

The questions asked in verses 3, 4, and 5 suggest their own answer. The Spirit was ministered, and miracles were wrought, not by works of law, but by “the hearing of faith,” that is, by the obedience of faith, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Rom. 10:17. Thus Paul’s labor, and the first experience of the Galatians, were exactly in line with the experience of Abraham, whose faith was accounted for righteousness. Let it be remembered that the “false brethren” who preached “another gospel,” even the false gospel of righteousness by works, were Jews,

and claimed Abraham for their father. It would be their boast that they were children of Abraham, and they would appeal to their circumcision as proof of the fact. But the very thing upon which they relied as proving them to be children of Abraham, was proof that they were not; for “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Abraham had the righteousness of faith before he was circumcised. Rom. 4:11. “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Abraham was not justified by works (Rom. 4:2, 3), but his faith “wrought righteousness.”

The Gospel to the Gentiles

“The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham.” This verse will bear much reading. An understanding of it will guard one against many errors. And it is not difficult to understand; simply hold to what it says, and you have it.

For one thing, the verse shows us that the Gospel was preached at least as early as the days of Abraham. And it was God Himself who preached it; therefore it was the true and only Gospel. It was the same Gospel that Paul preached; so that we have no other Gospel than that which Abraham had. The Gospel differs in no particular now from what it was in Abraham's day; for his day was the day of Christ. John 8:56. God requires just the same things now that He required then, and nothing more.

Moreover, the Gospel was then preached to the Gentiles, for Abraham was a Gentile, or, in other words, a heathen. He was brought up as a heathen, (Joshua 24:2), and was one till the Gospel was preached to him. So the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles was no new thing in the days of Peter and Paul. The Jewish nation was taken out from among the heathen, and it is only by the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen that Israel is built up and saved. See Acts 15:14-18; Rom. 11:25, 26. Thus we see that the apostle takes the Galatians, and us, back to the fountain-head,—to the place

where God Himself preaches the Gospel to us Gentiles. No Gentile can hope to be saved in any other way or by any other gospel than that by which Abraham was saved.

The Blessing of Abraham

The Gospel was summed up to Abraham in these words: “In thee shall all nations be blessed.” It should be stated here that the two words “heathen” (“Gentiles,” in R.V.) and “nations,” in verse 8, come from the same word in the Greek. In both the Hebrew and the Greek “the heathen” and “the nations” are the same. Now the blessing of Abraham was the blessing of sins forgiven, and of righteousness by faith. See Romans 4:6-11. And this faith was personal faith in Christ crucified and risen, as we learn from Acts 3:25, 26. “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” “All

nations” are included in this blessing; hence we are again brought to the fact that there is no gospel for any people under heaven except the Gospel that was preached to Abraham. See Acts 4:12. The blessing comes to all, but is not accepted by all.

“They Which Be of Faith”

These are “blessed with faithful Abraham.” That blessing is that their sins are forgiven, and the Lord “will not impute sin” to them. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. So, then, the Lord will not impute transgression of the law to those who are of faith. But the Lord will deal justly, and will tell the truth; therefore, when the Lord does not impute sin to anybody, that shows that he has no sin, or, in other words, he is not a transgressor of the law, and if not a transgressor of the law, then he is a keeper of the law. Here, again, we come back to the point that justification by faith means nothing else than being made righteous, or doers of the law, by faith. The blessing is “in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

A Contrast: Under the Curse

Note the sharp contrast in verses 9 and 10. “They which be of faith are blessed,” but “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Faith brings the blessing; works bring the curse, or, rather, leave one under the curse. The curse is on all, for “he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” John 3:18. Faith removes the curse. Who are under the curse?—“As many as are of the works of the law.” Note that it does not say that those who do the law are under the curse, for that would be a contradiction of Rev. 22:14: “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.” Ps. 119:1. So, then, they that are of faith are keepers of the law; for they that are of faith are blessed, and those who do the commandments are blessed. By faith they do the commandments. The Gospel is

contrary to human nature, and so it is that we become doers of the law, not by doing it, but by believing. “The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a Stumbling-stone and Rock of Offense; and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” Rom. 9:30-33.

What the Curse Is

No one can read Gal. 3:10 carefully and thoughtfully without seeing that the curse is transgression of the law. Disobedience to God’s law is itself the curse; for “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Rom. 5:12. Sin has death wrapped up in it. Without sin death would be impossible, for “the sting of death is sin.” 1 Cor. 15:56. “As many as are of the works of the

law are under the curse.” Why? Is it because the law is a curse?—Not by any means. Why then?—Because it is written, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Mark it well: They are not cursed because they do the law, but because they do not do it. So, then, we see that being of the works of the law does not mean that one is doing the law. No; “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8:7. All are under the curse, and he who thinks to get out by his own works, remains there. The curse consists in not continuing in all things that are written in the law; therefore the blessing means perfect conformity to the law. This is as plain as language can make it.

Blessing and Cursing

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but

turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods.” Deut. 11:26-28. “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him; for He is thy life.” Deut. 30:19, 20.

What It Means to Us

Have you fully grasped the meaning of all this? Do you see what it means to us? Do you realize what the blessing of the Lord is? It is righteousness, perfect harmony with God’s perfect law. This is the blessing of Abraham, which he obtained through faith in Christ, and which is offered to all men of all nations. Freedom from sin! “Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves” (Titus 3:5, R.V.), but by the “works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Backslider or sinner of the world, whoever you are, this means you. You have desired to do right, to “live a better life,” but you have not been able. Well, there is One, and only One, who can live that better life, and that is Christ. He can impart to you the blessing of obedience of righteousness. “He is thy life;” therefore take Him, submit to Him, and He will live in you that blessed life that will make you a blessing.

Chapter 8

Redeemed from the Curse

Galatians 3:10-14

The third and fourth chapters of Galatians have to do with Abraham as the typical Christian. That which God gave him and promised him is precisely what He gives and promises to all. We say “gives and promises,” instead of promises and gives, since giving is the first thing that God does. It is His nature to give. Without respect to persons, He gives to every man. He is not content with simply promising, and then leaving circumstances to determine whether or not anything shall be given. No, He gives, and in His gift is a promise. “Much more” is the description of every gift of God. If those who receive God’s gifts receive them joyfully and thankfully, then the very reception of them is the assurance of much more to come. God “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25); if they care for these things, and show appreciation of them, then God will give “more

abundantly.” So again we say, Every gift of God is a promise of more.

God blessed Abraham, not because of Abraham’s goodness, but in order that he might become good. Abraham believed God, and accepted the blessing, and so became good. The Gospel was preached to Abraham in the words, “In thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed;” and this blessing comes to us through Christ, who, having been raised from the dead, has been sent to turn every one of us away from our iniquities. Acts 3:25, 26. This is what is presented in the portion of Galatians that we began to study last week. “They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them

shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Gal. 3:10-14.

Good Works

The Bible does not disparage good works. On the contrary, they are exalted. “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable.” Titus 3:8. The charge against the unbelieving is that they are “unto every good work reprobate.” Titus 1:16. Timothy was exhorted to “charge them that are rich in this world. . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works.” 1 Tim. 6:17, 18. And the apostle Paul prayed for us all, that we might “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work.” Col. 1:10. Still further, we

are assured that God has created us in Christ Jesus “unto good works,” “that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10.

Good Works Only By Faith

“If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Rom. 4:2, 3. Altho good works are required of us, they are not the “works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves” (Titus 3:5, R. V.), but the “good works, which God afore prepared, that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10, R. V.). These good works God has “laid up” for them that fear Him, He Himself having “wrought” them for those who trust in Him before the sons of men. Ps. 31:19. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” John 6:29.

“The Just Shall Live by Faith”

This is proof that no one is justified by the law;

for if one were righteous by works, then it would not be by faith. There is no exception, no dividing up. It is not said that some of the just shall live by faith, or that they shall live by faith and works, but, “The just shall live by faith.” All of the just shall live by faith alone. The law and the works of the law have nothing whatever to do in the work of justifying men, altho the law itself “is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Rom. 7:12.

Who Are the Just?

In other versions than the English, as, for instance, the German and Danish, these texts are made much plainer, because they use the word which conveys the idea more perfectly than the word “just” does to us. This is the way it is; “But that no man is made righteous by the law in the sight of God it is evident; for, the righteous shall live by faith.” The words “just” and “righteous” really mean the same thing, but in the word “justify” the majority of readers do not readily recognize the phrase “to make righteous.” We see,

therefore, that righteousness is the end to be attained. Righteousness means right-doing, and the law is the standard of right-doing. The only question before us is how this desired object is to be attained. How is the sinner to be made righteous—to be made a doer of the law?— Not by the law itself, for that does nothing; it simply points out the right way; but we ourselves are “without strength.” Righteousness therefore must come from without, from some living thing, and when attained in genuineness will be “witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Rom. 3:21.

Life Is Doing

“The man that doeth them shall live in them.” The law calls for action, deeds, and nothing else. If good deeds are manifested, the law is satisfied. “The law is not of faith;” it cares nothing for faith; works, and works alone, commend themselves to it. How those works are obtained is of no consequence to it, provided they are present. There is life in the doing of them, for only he who is alive can do them. Notice the word “them.” It

indicates the fullness of the law. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” But “all have sinned;” and since all are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), it is very evident that no one can of himself be in the position described by the words, “The man that does them shall live in them.” The man must first be made alive before he can do them. Do not forget, however, that in all this the law is exalted and honored, instead of discredited. There is life in obedience to it, and death in disobedience. The curse is only on those who do not do it. “In keeping of them there is great reward.” Ps. 19:11.

Sin and Death the Curse

That death is the curse is evident from the last part of verse 13, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Christ was made a curse for us in that He hung on a tree, that is, was crucified. So we have the substance of verse 10 thus, that those who do not continue in the things written in the law are dead; that is, disobedience is death. And this is

what the Scripture says; “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Sin contains death, so that when by one man sin entered into the world, death came by sin. Rom. 5:12.

Christ Made a Curse for Us

That “Christ died for the ungodly” is evident to all who read the Bible. He “was delivered for our offenses.” Rom. 4:25. The death that was deserved, came on Him. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” Isa. 53:5. But death came by sin. Death is the curse that has passed upon all men, simply because “all have sinned.” So as Christ was “made a curse for us,” it follows that Christ was “made to be sin on our behalf.” 2 Cor. 5:21, R.V. He “bore our sins in His own body” up to the tree. 1 Peter 2:24, margin. Note that our sins were “in His own body.” It was no superficial work that He undertook. The sins were not merely figuratively laid on Him, but they

were actually in Him. He was made a curse for us, made to be sin for us, and consequently suffered death for us. To some this truth seems repugnant; to the Greeks it is foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling bloc, but “to us who are saved, it is the power of God.” For bear in mind that it was our sins that He bore in His own body, not His own sins. The same scripture that tells us that He was made to be sin for us, assures us that He “knew no sin.” The same text that tells us that He carried our sins “in His own body,” is careful to let us know that he “did no sin.” The fact that he could carry our sin about with Him, and in Him, being actually made to be sin for us, and yet not do any sin, is to His everlasting glory and our eternal salvation from sin.

Redeemed from Sin and Death

Christ has redeemed us from that which He suffered; for “with His stripes we are healed.” So He has redeemed us—brought us back—from sin and death. He has redeemed us from death in redeeming us from sin, since death is but the result

of sin. But sin is wrong-doing—the transgression of the law. 1 John 3:4. So it is from our “vain manner of life” that we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. 1 Peter 1:18, 19, R.V. By becoming sin for us, and carrying our sin up to and on the tree, Christ has redeemed us from the transgression of the law; that is, He has redeemed us from committing sin. This is the glorious reality of the Gospel, present salvation from the commission of “the sin that doth so easily beset us.” In this is contained the sum of all things. And this great blessing comes to us through faith.

The Revelation of the Cross

In verse 13 we are brought back to the subject presented in Gal. 2:20 and 3:1,—the ever-present, universal cross. We can not go into the subject in detail, for it is inexhaustible; but note the following facts, which may suggest many more things to your minds:—

1. The redemption from sin and death is accomplished through the cross. Gal. 3:13.

2. The Gospel is all contained in the cross; for the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16); and “unto us which are saved” the cross of Christ “is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

3. Christ crucified is the only way Christ is revealed to fallen men. There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby salvation may be obtained (Acts 4:12), and therefore it is all that God sets forth before men, since He does not wish to confuse them. “Christ and Him crucified” is all that Paul wished to know; it is all that any man needs to know. Thus the one thing that men need is salvation; if they get that, they get all things; but salvation is found only in the cross of Christ; therefore God puts before the eyes of men nothing else; He gives them just what they need. Jesus Christ is by God set forth openly crucified before the eyes of every man, so that there is no excuse for any to be lost, or to continue in sin.

4. Christ is set forth before men only as the crucified Redeemer, and since that from which men need to be saved is the curse, He is set forth as bearing the curse. Wherever there is any curse, there is Christ bearing it. We have already seen that Christ bore, and still bears, our curse, in that He bears our sin. He also bears the curse of the earth itself, for He bore the crown of thorns, and the curse pronounced on the earth was, “Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth.” Gen. 3:18. So the whole creation, which now groans under the curse, has been redeemed through the cross of Christ. Rom. 8:19-23.

5. It is only on the cross that Christ bears the curse, for His being made a curse for us was indicated by His hanging on the cross. The cross is the symbol of the curse, but also of deliverance from the curse, since it is the cross of Christ the Conqueror and Deliverer. The very curse itself, therefore, presents the cross, and proclaims our deliverance.

6. Where is the curse? Ah, where is it not? The blindest can see it, if he will but acknowledge the evidence of his own senses. Imperfection is a curse, yea, that is the curse; and imperfection is on everything connected with this earth. Man is imperfect, and even the finest plant that grows from the earth is not as perfect as it might be. There is nothing that meets the eye that does not show the possibility of improvement, even if our untrained eyes can not see the absolute necessity of it. When God made the earth, everything was “very good,” or, as the Hebrew idiom has it, “good exceedingly.” God Himself could see no chance, no possibility, for improvement. But now it is different. The gardener spends his thought and labor trying to improve the fruits and flowers under his care. And since the best that the earth produces reveals the curse, what need be said of the gnarled, stunted growths, the withered and blasted buds and leaves and fruits, and the noxious, poisonous weeds? Everywhere “hath the curse devoured the

earth.” Isa. 24:6.

7. What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? Is it discouragement?—Nay; “for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. 5:9. Altho the curse is visible everywhere—

“Change and decay in all around I see;”

yet things live, and men live. But the curse is death, and no man and no thing in creation can bear death and still live. Death kills. But Christ is He that liveth, and was dead, and is alive forevermore. Rev. 1:18. He alone can bear the curse—death—and still live. Therefore the fact that there is life on the earth and in man, in spite of the curse, is proof that the cross of Christ is everywhere. Every blade of grass, every leaf of the forest, every shrub and tree, every flower and fruit, even the bread that we eat, is stamped with the cross of Christ. In our own bodies is Christ crucified. Everywhere is that cross; and as the preaching of the cross is the power of God, which

is the Gospel, so it is that the everlasting power of God is revealed in all things that He has made. Rom. 1:16-20, compared with 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, amounts to a plain declaration that the cross of Christ is seen in all the things that God has made—even in us.

Courage and Despair

“Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.” Ps. 40:12. But not only may we with confidence cry unto God out of the depths, but God in His infinite mercy has so ordered it that the very depths themselves are a source of confidence. The fact that we are in the depths of sin, and yet live, is proof that God Himself, in the person of Christ on the cross, is present with us to deliver us. So everything, even the curse—for everything is under the curse—preaches the Gospel. Our own weakness and sinfulness, instead of being a cause of discouragement, are, if we believe the Lord, a

pledge of redemption. Out of weakness we are made strong. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Rom. 8:37. Truly, God has not left Himself without witness. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” 1 John 5:10.

The Blessing from the Curse

Christ bore the curse in order that the blessing might come to us. He bears the curse now, being crucified before us, and we with Him, that we may continually experience the blessing. Death to Him is life to us. He was made to be sin for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. What is the blessing that we receive through the curse that He bears?—It is the blessing of salvation from sin; for as the curse is the transgression of the law (Gal. 3:10), the blessing consists in turning away every one of us from our iniquities (Acts 3:26). Christ suffered the curse, even sin and death, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” Gal. 3:14. And what is the blessing of

Abraham?—That we have already seen, but we may well read it again. Having stated that Abraham was justified, made righteous by faith, the apostle adds: “Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Rom. 4:6-8. And then he shows that this blessing comes on the Gentiles as well as the Jews who believe, because Abraham received it when he was circumcised, “that he might be the father of all them that believe.” The blessing is freedom from sin, even as the curse is the doing of sin; and as the curse reveals the cross, so we find that the very curse is by the Lord made to proclaim the blessing. The fact that we live, altho we are sinners, is the assurance that deliverance from the sin is ours. “While there’s life there’s hope,” says the adage. Yes, because the Life is our hope. Thank God for the blessed hope.

“The Promise of the Spirit”

Christ hath redeemed us, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Do not make the mistake of reading this as tho it were “that we might receive the promise of the gift of the Spirit.” It does not say that, and it does not mean that, as a little thought will show. He has redeemed us, and that fact proves the gift of the Spirit, for it was only “through the eternal Spirit” that He “offered Himself without spot to God.” Heb. 9:14. But for the Spirit, we should not know that we were sinners; much less should we know redemption. The Spirit convinces of sin and of righteousness. John 16:8. “It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” 1 John 5:6. “He that believeth hath the witness in himself.” Christ is crucified in every man. That, as we have already seen, is shown in the fact that we are all under the curse, and Christ alone, on the cross, bears the curse. But it is through the Spirit that Christ dwells on earth among men. Faith enables us to receive the testimony of this witness, and rejoice in that which the possession of the Spirit

assures.

The Spirit the Pledge of Inheritance

Look ahead in our epistle and see what is said of redemption and the Spirit: “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Gal. 4:4-6. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Rom. 8:16, 17. Thus we see that the gift of the Spirit, which assures us of our redemption through the cross, is itself a promise. As we said at the beginning, all God’s gifts are promises of more. Now read how God’s purpose in the Gospel is to gather together in one all things in Jesus Christ: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the

praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that [or when] ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” Eph. 1:10-14.

Of this inheritance we must speak further later on. Suffice it now to say that it is the inheritance promised to Abraham, whose children we become by faith. The inheritance belongs to all who are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus; and the Spirit that marks our sonship is the promise, the pledge, the first-fruits of that inheritance. Those who accept Christ’s glorious deliverance from the curse of the law,—redemption not from obedience to the law, for obedience is not a curse, but from disobedience to the law,—have in the Spirit a taste of the power and blessing of the world to come.

Chapter 9

The Promise and Its Surety

Galatians 3:15-18

We closed our study last week with the fourteenth verse of the third chapter, the last words being concerning “the promise of the Spirit.” Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us, Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. It is clear, as shown in the last study, that the receiving of the promise of the Spirit through faith, refers not simply to the receiving of the Spirit, and much less to the receiving of the promises that we shall at some time have the Spirit, but to the receiving of that of which the presence of the Spirit is a pledge. From Eph. 1:13, 14 we learned that the Spirit is a pledge, the first-fruits of an inheritance that has been purchased for us. In our study this week we have to do with that promised inheritance. And first we will read the portion of the text that

outlines it.

The Lesson for the Week

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Tho it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Gal. 3:15-18.

Before beginning our study, it may be well to state that we shall not try to treat of the whole of this portion of Scripture this week, so that if there are some things left untouched, the reader will not feel disappointed. There is so close connection between all the statements in this chapter that it is

difficult to select out any special verses for study. All the verses just quoted are necessary to the subject before us this week, yet they must also be considered in connection with the verses that will come in our next week's study.

The Promise Was Made to Abraham

It will be seen that Abraham is the one about whom this chapter centers. He is the one to whom the Gospel of world-wide salvation was preached. He believed, and received the blessing, even the blessing of righteousness. All who believe are blessed with believing Abraham. They who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made." "If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Thus it is clear that the promise to us is the promise that was made to Abraham, and in which we share as his children.

The Promise Concerns an Inheritance

This is evident from verse 18: “If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” This agrees with what has been already been noted in Eph. 1:13, 14, that the Spirit is the pledge of a possession that has been purchased. “The promise of the Spirit” is therefore an inheritance. That is, the Spirit not only promises us an inheritance, but the possession of the Spirit is the surety of the inheritance. When, therefore, we read that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, we can see that it is the same as saying that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, in order that we might receive an inheritance. And so we read in Heb. 9:14, 15 that Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, will purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God; because “He is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the remission of transgression under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the

promise of eternal inheritance.”

What the Eternal Inheritance Is

The last words of the preceding paragraph set us on the track of the answer to this. It is an “eternal inheritance.” This of course follows from the fact that Christ has redeemed us from the curse in order that we might receive this inheritance; for the curse is death, and whatever we receive as the consequence of being saved from death, must be eternal. But we must turn to the direct record of the promise to Abraham, and there we shall find the matter clearly stated. The promise is many times repeated, but in order to save time we shall take only one statement of it. In Gen. 17:7, 8 we read these words of God to Abraham:—

“I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an

everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

The Whole World

Here we see most clearly that the promised inheritance is land—the land of Canaan. But, let it be borne in mind, it is an “everlasting possession.” Abraham himself, as well as his seed, possess it to eternity. Therefore the possession of the land of Canaan, according to the promise to Abraham, involves the possession of everlasting life in which to enjoy it; but immortality is bestowed only at the coming of Christ and the resurrection. This Abraham well understood; for even while he was in the land of Canaan, he sojourned in it as in a strange country, desiring and looking for “a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb. 11:9-16); and the fact that he “died in faith, not having received the promises” shows that he knew that he was to receive it at the resurrection.

But when the land of Canaan is thus given to Abraham for an everlasting possession, the restoration of all things will take place (Acts 3:20,

21), so that the possession of the land of Canaan will be in reality the possession of the whole earth. So Paul, speaking with direct reference to the record in the seventeenth of Genesis, says: “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” Rom. 4:13.

Therefore we, “according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13. This is the promised inheritance, the possession of which is assured to us by the Spirit.

An Inheritance without a Curse

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse; . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” This “promise of the Spirit” we have seen to be the possession of the whole earth made new—redeemed from the curse; for “the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of

the children of God.” The earth, fresh and new from the hand of God, perfect in every respect, was given to man for a possession. Gen. 1:27, 28, 31. Man sinned and brought the curse upon himself. Christ has taken the whole curse, both of man and of all creation, on Himself. He redeems the earth from the curse, that it may be the everlasting possession that God originally designed it to be; and He also redeems man from the curse, that he may be fitted for the possession of such an inheritance. And this, let it be noted, is the sum of the Gospel. The whole Gospel has reference to this, and to this alone. Man redeemed, but with no place to live in, would present an incomplete work. While the cross of Christ is the sole agent of redemption, yet “Christ crucified” would be nothing if it did not include Christ risen. But Christ risen means Christ risen to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and this means: “To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” Rev. 3:21. Without this “blessed hope” our faith would be vain, and we should yet be in our sins; for the

power by which we are redeemed is the power by which the new heavens and the new earth are made. Their freedom from the curse guarantees our freedom from the curse, for God created the earth not in vain, but formed it to be inhabited, and “some must enter therein.” Then will be an earth without any curse, inhabited by people wholly freed from the curse of sin and death. “And there shall be no more curse.” Rev. 22:3.

The Covenants of Promise

That the covenant and promise of God are one and the same thing, is clearly seen from Gal. 3:17, where it appears that the disannulling the covenant would be the making void the promise. In Gen. 17 we read that God made a covenant with Abraham, to give him the land of Canaan—the whole world—for an everlasting possession; but Gal. 3:18 says that God gave it to him by promise. God’s covenants with men can be nothing else than promises to them: for “who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” Rom. 11:35. God does not make bargains

with men, because He well knows that man could not fulfill his part. Knowing that man is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev. 3:17), God counsels him to buy of Him everything that is needed, but to buy “without money, and without price.” In short, God promises man everything he needs, and more than we can ask or think, as a gift. We give Him ourselves, that is, nothing, and He gives us Himself, that is, everything. That which makes all the trouble is that even when men are willing to recognize the Lord at all, they want to make bargains with Him. They want it to be a “mutual” affair,—a transaction in which they will be considered as on a par with God. But whoever deals with God must deal with Him on His own terms, that is, on a basis of fact—that we have nothing, and He has everything and is everything.

The Covenant Confirmed

The covenant, that is, the promise of God to give men the whole earth made new, after having made them free from the curse, was “confirmed

before of God in Christ.” He is the surety of the new covenant, even the everlasting covenant. “For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea; wherefore also through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.” 2 Cor. 1:20, R.V. In Him we have obtained the inheritance (Eph. 1:11), for the Holy Spirit is the first-fruits of the inheritance, and the possession of the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself dwelling in the heart by faith.

Confirmed by an Oath of God.

“When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself; . . . for men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of

the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Heb. 6:13-20.

It was the oath of God, therefore, that confirmed the covenant made to Abraham; that promise and oath to Abraham are our ground of hope, our strong consolation; but it is “sure and steadfast,” because the oath sets forth Christ as the pledge, the surety, and “He ever liveth,”—the covenant is confirmed in Him, and no one can disannul it or add anything to it. That is to say, the Gospel to-day is precisely the same in every particular that it was in the days of Abraham. It is summed up in this: God will give to men “the first dominion,” the earth free from all curse; the promise is to all without exception, and the fulfillment is to all who believe in Christ, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Just as the earth was given to Adam in the beginning, without his having done anything to earn it, even so the new earth is a

free gift,—the inheritance is solely by promise; but this inheritance is an inheritance of righteousness, and this necessary righteousness God gives to us, creating us new creatures in Christ, even as in the beginning. He created Adam a perfect man. And all this is assured to us by the oath of God, in which He pledged His own existence. But this oath was in Christ crucified, and the cross of Christ, bearing the curse everywhere, is the assurance that God in Christ ever liveth.

Chapter 10

The Promise and the Law

Galatians 3:15-22

Since we considered only certain features in the text studied last week, we shall include it in the portion for this week, so that the intimate connection may be preserved. We have therefore the following as

The Scripture Lesson

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Tho it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if

the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Gal. 3:15–22.

The things in this text that were considered last week were the following: The promise was made to Abraham; the promise concerns an inheritance; that inheritance is the whole world—the earth made new; an inheritance without a curse is the promise of the Spirit; the Lord redeems men from the curse in order that they may dwell forever in an earth redeemed from the curse; the covenant and the promise are the same thing; that covenant has

been confirmed; it was confirmed in Christ, to Abraham, by the oath of God, and that oath is our hope and comfort till the present day. With this outline of what has already been passed over, we can proceed with our study.

An Unchangeable Covenant

God is not a man, but it is sometimes allowable to use human things in illustrating the divine. God is not a man, that He should lie or change. Man is changeable, yet even a man's covenant, if it once be confirmed, can not be disannulled or added to. No change whatever can be made in it. How much more, then, must this be the case with God's covenant? "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him." Eccl. 3:14. "When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself. . . . For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show

unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.” Heb. 6:13-18. The covenant, we have already seen, is the promise to Abraham, and that was confirmed by God’s oath, and made as unchangeable as His character.

Abraham and Christ

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” It can not be too strongly impressed upon the minds of men that Christ is the Seed of Abraham, and that the covenant was confirmed in Him. There would be no difficulty whatever about the question of Israel if this one fact were remembered. Christ is the Seed of Abraham, and there is no other; for “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” Abraham and Christ are inseparably linked together. “To Abraham and his seed were the

promises made,” how many soever they were. Nothing was made to Abraham that could be obtained in any other way than through Christ; and Christ never comes into the possession of anything that does not belong to Abraham. This is plainly stated in the text.

We will not stop to parley over the matter of “literal seed” and the “spiritual seed.” Christ is spiritual, that we know, for no one can call Him Lord, except by the Spirit; but He is also very literal: “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see.” We are glad to know that the literal can also be spiritual; were it not so, then we would be yet in our sins. But to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. The Seed must be as literal as Abraham, even tho He be spiritual; and Christ “took on Him the seed of Abraham.” It is enough for us at present to hold to the fact that Abraham and Christ are equally concerned in this promised inheritance, which is spiritual because the Spirit is the first-fruits of it. If we are of faith, then we are the children of Abraham and sharers in the blessing.

The Law Can Not Make the Covenant Void

Do not forget as we proceed that the covenant and the promise are the same thing, and that it conveys land, even the whole earth made new, to Abraham and his seed; and remember also that, since only righteousness is to dwell in the new heavens and the new earth promised to Abraham and his seed, the promise includes the making righteous of all who believe. This is done in Christ, in whom the promise is confirmed. The argument of verses 17 and 18 is therefore this: Since perfect righteousness was assured by the covenant made with Abraham, which was also confirmed in Christ, it is impossible that the law, which was spoken 430 years later, could introduce any new feature. The inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, but if after 430 years it should transpire that now the inheritance must be gained in some other way, then the promise would be of no effect, and the covenant would be made void. But that would involve the overthrow of God's government, and the ending of His existence; for

He pledged His own existence to give Abraham and his seed the inheritance and the righteousness necessary for it. “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” Rom. 4:13.

What Is the Use of the Law?

This is the question that the apostle Paul asks in verse 19, both for the purpose of anticipating the objections of the antinomians, and also that he may the more emphatically show the place of the law in the Gospel. The question is a very natural one. Since the inheritance is wholly by promise, and a covenant confirmed can not be changed, nothing can be taken from it, and nothing added to it, why did the law come in four hundred and thirty years afterward? “Wherefore then serveth the law?” “Why then the law?” What business has it here? What part does it act?

The Question Answered

“It was added because of transgressions.” Let it be understood that “the entering of the law” at Sinai was not the beginning of its existence. The law of God existed in the days of Abraham, and was kept by him. Gen. 26:5. God proved the children of Israel as to whether they would keep His law or not more than a month before the law was spoken upon Sinai. Ex. 16:1-4, 27, 28.

“It Was Added”

The word here rendered “added” is the same as that rendered “spoken” in Heb. 12:19: “They that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.” It is the same word that occurs in the Septuagint rendering of Deut. 5:22, where we read that God spoke the Ten Commandments with a great voice; “and He added no more.” So we may read the answer to the question, “Wherefore then the law?” thus: “It was spoken because of transgressions.”

Because of Transgressions

“Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound.” Rom. 5:20. In other words, “that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Rom. 7:13. It was given under circumstances of the most awful majesty, as a warning to the children of Israel that by their unbelief they were in danger of losing the promised inheritance. They did not, like Abraham, believe the Lord; and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” But the inheritance was promised “through the righteousness of faith,” so that the unbelieving Jews could not receive it. The law was therefore spoken to them to convince them that they had not the righteousness that was necessary for the possession of the inheritance; for, altho righteousness does not come by the law, it must be witnessed by the law. Rom. 3:21. In short, the law was given to show them that they had not faith, and so were not children of Abraham, and were therefore in a fair way to lose the inheritance. God would have put His law into their hearts, even as He put it into Abraham’s heart, if they had

believed; but when they disbelieved, yet still professed to be heirs of the promise, it was necessary to show them in the most marked manner that their unbelief was sin. The law was spoken because of transgression, or, what is the same thing, because of the unbelief of the people.

In the Hand of a Mediator

For the present we may pass by the question of time involved in the phrase, “till the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made,” since our present study is the relation of the law to the promise. The law was given to the people from Sinai “in the hand of a Mediator.” Who was this Mediator?—There can be only one answer: “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Tim. 2:5. “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” God is one, the people are the other, and Christ Jesus is the Mediator. Just as surely as God is one party to the transaction, Christ must be the Mediator, for there is no other mediator between God and men. “Neither is there salvation in any

other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

Christ’s Work as Mediator

Man has wandered from God and rebelled against Him. “All we like sheep have gone astray.” Our iniquities have separated between us and Him. Isa. 59:1, 2. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8:7. Christ came that He might destroy the enmity and reconcile us to God; for He is our peace. Eph. 2:14-16. Through Him we have access to God. Rom. 5:1, 2; Eph. 2:18. In Him the carnal mind, the rebellious mind, is taken away, and the mind of the Spirit given in its stead, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Rom. 8:3, 4. Christ’s work is to save that which was lost, to restore that which was broken, to reunite that which was separated. His name is “God with us;” and so with Him dwelling in us we are made “partakers of the divine nature.”

2 Peter 1:4.

The Law Not against the Promise

“Is the law then against the promises of God?”— Not by any means. Far from it. If it were, it would not be in the hands of a Mediator, Christ; for all the promises of God are in Him. 2 Cor. 1:20. So we find the law and the promise combined in Christ. We may know that the law was not and is not against the promises of God, from the fact that God gave both the promise and the law. We know also that the giving of the law introduced no new element into the covenant, since, having been confirmed, nothing could be added to or taken from the covenant. But the law is not useless, else God would not have given it. It is not a matter of indifference whether we keep it or not, for God commands it. But, all the same, it is not against the promise, and brings no new element in. Why?— Simply because the law is in the promise. The promise of the Spirit includes this: “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.” Heb. 8:10. And this is what God indicated

had been done for Abraham, when “He gave him the covenant of circumcision.” Read Rom. 4:11; 2:25-29; Phil. 3:3.

The Law Magnifies the Promise

The law, as already seen, is not against the promise, because it is in the promise. The promise that Abraham and his seed should inherit the world, was “through the righteousness of faith.” But the law is righteousness, as God says: “Harken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law.” Isa. 51:7. So, then, the righteousness which the law demands is the only righteousness that can inherit the promised land, but it is obtained, not by the works of the law, but by faith. The righteousness of the law is not attained by human efforts to do the law, but by faith. See Rom. 9:30-32. Therefore, the greater the righteousness which the law demands, the greater is seen to be the promise of God; for He has promised to give it to all who believe. Yea, He has sworn it. When, therefore, the law was spoken from Sinai, “out of the midst of the fire, of the

cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice,” accompanied by the sounding of the trump of God, and with the whole earth quaking at the presence of the Lord and all His holy angels, thus indicating the inconceivable greatness and majesty of the law of God, it was, to every one who remembered the oath of God, but a revelation of the wondrous greatness of God’s promise; for all the righteousness which the law demands, He has sworn to give to every one who trusts Him.

Conviction of Sin and of Righteousness

Jesus said of the Comforter, “When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” John 14:8. Of Himself He said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Mark 2:17. “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.” A man must feel his need before he will accept help; he must know his disease before he can apply the remedy. Even so the promise of righteousness will be utterly unheeded by one who does not realize that he is a sinner. The first part of

the comforting work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to convince men of sin. So “the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. 3:20. He who knows that he is a sinner is in the way to acknowledge it; and “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9. Thus the law is in the hands of the Spirit an active agent in inducing men to accept the fullness of the promise. No one hates the man who has saved his life by pointing out to him an unknown peril; on the contrary, such an one is regarded as a friend, and is always remembered with gratitude. Even so will the law be regarded by the one who has been prompted by its warning voice to flee from the wrath to come. He will ever say, with the psalmist, “I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love.”

Chapter 11

From Prison to a Palace Part 1

Galatians 3:22-29

Before proceeding to the close of this wonderful third chapter of Galatians, let us take a brief survey of the ground thus far covered in the chapter, that we may see just where we are.

Beginning with an expression of astonishment that the Galatians should be so foolish as to suppose that they themselves could perfect the mighty work which only the Spirit could begin, and that they could be induced to depart from the truth after they had seen Christ crucified among them, the apostle at once brings them to the case of Abraham, which at once settles the whole question of the method of salvation, and that for all people. They themselves had received the Spirit of righteousness by faith, “even as Abraham believed

God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

The blessing, we have seen, is the blessing of freedom from sin; but “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,” since the curse is upon all who do not continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them, and “there is none that does good.” So all are in sin; but “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” in hanging on the cross. He has redeemed us from the curse, that is, from the transgression of the law, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us, as upon all Gentiles, through faith. Faith in Christ crucified brings us into relationship with Abraham, and makes us sharers of his blessing, and no soul can ever get or hope for anything more. The blessing of Abraham is freedom from sin, through

the Spirit of truth, who convinces the world of sin and of righteousness; and he who is free from sin is an heir of the sinless inheritance, even the “new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” This is the promise of the Spirit.

How sure is this promise?

It is as sure as God’s existence, for it was continued by an oath of God in Christ, and even a man’s covenant, when it is once confirmed, can not be changed in any particular, or added to; much less then can God’s covenant, confirmed by His oath, be changed.

When was it confirmed?

It was confirmed to Abraham 430 years before the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law from Sinai. Moreover, it was made sure in Christ, who is the Seed of Abraham. Therefore the speaking of the law 430 years later can not in any way affect the covenant, which was that righteousness and the everlasting inheritance of

righteousness should be given to Abraham and his seed. The inheritance is not at all through the law, but solely by promise, “through the righteousness of faith.”

What, then, is the use of the law?

It was given because of transgression, of lack of faith, as a witness to the fact that the seed of Abraham were in danger of losing the inheritance, and to show them the measure of the righteousness which they must have by faith. But it was in no sense against the promise of God to give them righteousness, since it was “in the hand of a Mediator,” even “the Man Christ Jesus,” who is the “one Mediator between God and men.” The promise contained the law, and does still contain it, so that the law, however loudly it thunders its infinite demands, simply shows us the greatness of the righteousness which God freely gives us in Christ. This office the law performs until the Seed comes to whom the promise was made. This last fact, however, belongs to our present study. We come now to

The Text for the Next Week.

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal. 3:22-29.

All Shut Up in Prison

Note the similarity between verses 8 and 22. “The Scripture hath concluded [that is, shut up] all

under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” We see that the Gospel is preached by the same thing—the Scripture—that shuts men up under sin. The word “conclude” means literally “shut up,” just as is given in verse 23. Of course, a person who is shut up by the law is in prison. In human governments a criminal is shut up as soon as the law can get hold of him; God’s law is everywhere present, and always active, and therefore, the instant a man sins he is shut up. This is the condition of all the world, “for all have sinned,” and “there is none righteous, no, not one.”

“Under the Law”

“Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” We know that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23); therefore to be “under the law” is identical with being “under sin.” Let us

get this clearly in mind. The Scripture hath shut up all under sin. What for?—“That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Thus we see that those who are shut up under sin are those who are not of faith. But until faith comes, we are kept shut up under the law. Now since we are under the law until faith comes, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin, it is evident that to be under the law means to be under sin. Those who are under the law, therefore, are those who are transgressing it.

The Law a Jailer

“So that the law hath been our tutor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Verse 24, R.V. The words “to bring us” are marked both in the old version and the new as having been added to the text, so we have dropped them out. It really makes no material difference with the sense whether they are retained or omitted. It will be noticed also that the new version has “tutor” in the place of “schoolmaster.” The sense is much better conveyed by the word that is used in the German

and Scandinavian translations, which signifies “master of a house of correction.” The single word in our language corresponding to it would be jailer. The Greek word is the word which transliterated is “pedagog.” The word has come to be used as meaning “schoolmaster,” altho the Greek word has not at all the idea of a schoolmaster. “Taskmaster” would be better. The idea here is rather that of a guard who accompanies a prisoner who is allowed to walk about outside the prison walls. The prisoner, altho nominally at large, is really deprived of his liberty just the same as tho he were actually in a cell. But without stopping longer over words, we have the fact stated that all who do not believe are “under sin,” “shut up” “under the law,” and that therefore the law acts as their jailer. It is that that shuts them in, and will not let them off; the guilty can not escape in their guilt. God is merciful and gracious, but He will not clear the guilty. Ex. 34:6, 7. That is, He will not lie, by calling evil good.

Only One Door

Christ says, "I am the door." John 10:7, 9. He is also the sheepfold and the Shepherd. Men fancy that when they are outside the Fold they are free, and that to come into the Fold would mean a curtailing of their liberty; but it is exactly the reverse. Outside of Christ is bondage, in Him alone is there freedom. Outside of Christ the man is in prison, "holden with the cords of his sins." Prov. 5:22. "The strength of sin is the law." It is the law that declares him to be a sinner, and makes him conscious of his condition. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and "sin is not imputed when there is no law." Rom. 3:20; 5:13. The law really forms the sinner's prison walls. They close in on him, making him feel uncomfortable, oppressing him with a sense of sin, as tho they would press his life out. In vain he makes frantic efforts to escape. Those commandments stand as firm as the everlasting hills. Whichever way he turns he finds a commandment which says to him, "You can find no freedom by me, for you have sinned." If he seeks to make friends with the law, and promises

to keep it, he is no better off, for his sin still remains. It goads him and drives him to the only way of escape,—“the promise by faith of Jesus Christ.” In Christ he is made “free indeed,” for in Christ he is made the righteousness of God.

Chapter 12

From Prison to a Palace Part 2

Galatians 3:22-29

The Law Preaches the Gospel

“But,” says one, “the law says nothing of Christ.” No; but all creation does speak of Christ, proclaiming the power of His salvation. We have seen that the cross of Christ, “Christ and Him crucified,” is to be seen in every leaf of the forest, and indeed in everything that exists. Not only so, but every fiber of man’s being cries out for Christ. Men do not realize it, but Christ is “the Desire of all nations.” It is He alone that “satisfies the desire of every living thing.” Only in Him can relief be found for the world’s unrest and longing. Now since Christ, in whom is peace, “for He is our peace,” is seeking the weary and heavy-laden, and calling them to Himself, and every man has

longings that nothing else in the world can satisfy, it is evident that if the man is awakened by the law to keener consciousness of his condition, and the law continues goading him, giving him no rest, and shutting up every other way of escape, the man must at last find the Door of Safety. In Christ alone will the sinner find release from the lash of the law, for in Christ the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, and in Him the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. Rom. 8:4.

Faith Emancipates

When faith comes we are no longer under the jailer, no longer in prison. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” No longer slaves in chains, to be cast out, but sons, to be received into the Father’s presence as rightful members of the family, and heirs of all that He possesses. Faith is freedom, for the Spirit is given to all that believe (John 7:39; Eph. 1:13), and “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17).

When Does Faith Come?

Strangely enough, many have supposed that there was a definite time fixed for faith to come. This passage has been “interpreted” to mean that men were under the law until a certain time in the history of the world, and that at that time faith came, and then they were henceforth free from the law. The coming of faith they make synonymous with the manifestation of Christ on earth. We can not say that anybody ever thought so, for such an “interpretation” indicates utter absence of thought about the matter. It would make men to be saved in bulk, regardless of any concurrence on their part. It would have it that up to a certain time all were in bondage under the law, and that from that time henceforth all were free from sin. A man’s salvation would, therefore, depend simply on the accident of birth. If he lived before a certain time, he would be lost; if after, he would be saved. Such an absurdity need not take more of our time than the statement of it. No one can seriously think of the idea that the apostle is here speaking of a fixed, definite point of time in the history of the world,

dividing between two so-called “dispensations,” without at once abandoning it.

When, then, does faith come?

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Rom. 10:17. Whenever a man receives the Word of God, the word of promise, which brings with it the fullness of the law, and no longer fights against it, but yields to it, then faith comes to him. Read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and you will see that faith came from the beginning. Since the days of Abel, men have found freedom by faith. The only time fixed is “now,” “to-day.” “Now is the accepted time.” “To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

How Great Is This Freedom?

What is the freedom that comes by faith? That is easily settled by a few texts of Scripture. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and makes one comprehend “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which

passeth knowledge.” Eph. 3:18, 19. This is the “large place” in which Christ causes the believer to walk at liberty. The whole universe is His. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” 1 Sam. 2:8. “For he hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary, from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death.” Ps. 102:19, 20. For “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” Eph. 2:4-7; 1:20, 21. This is “the glorious liberty of the children of God,” the liberty to which the law shuts us up, and towards which it drives us. So emphatically is it true that the law is not against the promise.

Putting on Christ by Baptism

“As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?” Rom. 6:3. It is by His death that Christ redeems us from the curse of the law; but we must die with Him. Baptism is “the likeness of His death.” We rise to walk “in newness of life,” even Christ’s life. See Gal. 2:20. Having put on Christ, we are one in Him. We are completely identified with Him. Our identity is lost in His. It is often said of one who has been converted, “He is so changed you would not know him; he is not the same man.” No, he is not. God has turned him into “another man.” Therefore, being one with Christ, he has a right to whatever Christ has, and a right to “the heavenly places” where Christ sits. From the prison-house of sin, he is exalted to the dwelling-place of God. This, of course, presupposes that baptism is with him a reality, not a mere outward form. It is not simply into the visible water that he is baptized, but “into Christ,” into His life.

One in Christ, the Seed

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” “There is no difference.” This is the key-note of the Gospel. All are alike sinners, and all are saved in the same way. They who would make a distinction on the ground of nationality, claiming that there is something different for the Jew than for the Gentile, might just as well make a difference on the ground of sex, claiming that women can not be saved in the same way and at the same time as men, or that a servant can not be saved in the same way as his master. No; there is but one way, and all human beings, of whatever race or condition, are equal before God. “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus,” and Christ is the One. So it is that “He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.” “For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” There is but one seed, but it embraces all

who are Christ's.

Christ Not for Himself

Christ did not live and die for Himself. It was not necessary that He should bear the curse of the earth in order to possess it as God; for it never passed out of God's ownership. Christ came as the Son of man, to win back as man, for man, that which man had lost. "He taketh on Him the seed of Abraham." Therefore it is that it is impossible that the seed should be complete in Jesus alone, as a single individual. He is the representative man. God's purpose is to "gather together in one all things in Christ." Eph. 1:10. So the seed includes every soul who can be induced to accept the Lord Jesus, and become one with Him. And this gives the glorious assurance that whatever He has is ours.

"Till the Seed Should Come"

It needs not many words now to determine what is meant by the phrase, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." We know

what the seed is, and we know that it has not yet come in its fulness. To be sure, Christ was once manifested on earth in the flesh, but He did not receive the promised inheritance, any more than Abraham did. Abraham had not so much as to put his foot on (Acts 7:5), and Christ had not where to lay His head. Moreover, Christ can not come into the inheritance until Abraham does also, for the promise was “to Abraham and to his seed.” The Lord by the prophet Ezekiel spoke of the inheritance at the time when David ceased to have a representative on his throne on earth, and He foretold the overthrow of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, in these words: “Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.” Eze. 21:26, 27.

So Christ sits on His Father’s throne, “from henceforth expecting till His foes be made His footstool.” Soon will He come, but not until the last soul has accepted Him that can by any possibility

be induced to accept salvation. When He comes to execute judgment, and to slay those who said, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” He comes “with ten thousands of His saints.” Jude 14.

Then will the Seed be complete, and the promise will be fulfilled. And until that time the law will faithfully perform its task of stirring up and pricking the consciences of sinners, giving them no rest until they become identified with Christ, or cast Him off altogether. Do you accept the terms? Will you cease your complaints against the law which would save you from sinking into a fatal sleep? and will you, in Christ, accept its righteousness? Then, as Abraham’s seed, and an heir according to the promise, you can rejoice in your freedom from the bondage of sin, singing:—

“I’m the child of a King,
The child of a King;
With Jesus my Saviour,
I’m the child of a King.”

Chapter 13

The Adoption of Sons

Galatians 4:1-7

It is absolutely impossible to exhaust any portion of Scripture. The more one studies it, the more one sees in it, and not only that, but the more one becomes conscious of the fact that there is much more in it than appears to view. The Word of God, like Himself, is absolutely unfathomable. It can not therefore be wearisome if in this study we frequently review that which we have previously passed over. Indeed one's understanding of any given portion of the epistle depends on the thoroughness of his knowledge of that which precedes it. Let us therefore give a little further attention to that portion of the third chapter which treats of

The Seed

First of all it must be borne in mind that Christ

is the Seed. That is plainly stated. But Christ did not live for Himself, and He is not heir simply for Himself. He has won an inheritance, not for Himself, but for His brethren. God's purpose is to "gather together in one all things in Christ." He will finally put an end to divisions of every kind, and He does it now in those who accept Him. In Christ there are no distinctions of nationality, and no classes and ranks. No Christian thinks of any other man as English, German, French, Russian, Turk, Chinese, or African, but simply as a man, and therefore a possible heir of God through Christ. If that other man, no matter what his race or nation, be also a Christian, then the bond becomes mutual, and therefore still stronger. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It is for this reason that it is impossible for a Christian to engage in war. He knows no distinction of nationality, but regards all men as his brothers. But the chief reason why he can not engage in warfare is that the life of Christ is his life, for he is one with Christ; and it would be as impossible for him to fight as it would be for

Christ to seize a sword and wield it in self-defense.

But we are not now engaged in discussing war. We referred to this simply to show the absolute unity of believers in Christ. They are one. There is therefore but one seed, and that is Christ; for however many millions of true believers there may be, they are only one in Christ. Each man has his own individuality, but it is in every case only the manifestation of some phase of the individuality of Christ. With those who have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.” Col. 3:11.

In Christ’s explanation of the parable of the tares and the wheat, we are told that “the good seed are the children of the kingdom.” Matt. 13:38. The man would not allow the tares to be pulled out of the wheat, because in the early stage it would be difficult to distinguish in every case between the wheat and the tares, and some of the wheat would

be destroyed. So he said, “Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.” It is in the harvest that the seed is gathered. Everybody knows that. But what the parable especially shows is that it is in the harvest that the seed is fully manifested; in short, that the seed comes at harvest-time. But “the harvest is the end of the world.” So the time when “the seed should come, to whom the promise was made,” is the end of the world, when the time comes for the promise of the new earth to be fulfilled. Indeed, the seed can not possibly be said to come before that time, since the end of the world will come just as soon as the last person who can be induced to accept Christ has done so; and the seed is not complete as long as there is one grain lacking.

Read now, in the nineteenth verse of the third chapter, that the law was spoken because of transgression, “till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.” What do we learn from

that?—Simply this, that the law as spoken from Sinai, without the change of a single letter, is an integral part of the Gospel, and must be presented in the Gospel until the second coming of Christ, at the end of the world. “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law.” And what of the time when heaven and earth pass, and the new heaven and the new earth come? Then the law will not be needed written in a book, for men to preach to sinners, showing them their sins, for it will be in the heart of every man. Heb. 8:10, 11. Done away?—Not by any means; but indelibly engraved in the heart of every individual, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

With the truth concerning the seed before us, and the parable of the wheat and the tares fresh in our minds, let us proceed in our study.

The Text for Study

“But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bond-servant, tho he is

lord of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed of the father. So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world; but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.” Gal. 4:1-7, R.V.

A Statement of Fact

The first two verses explain themselves. They are a simple statement of fact. Altho a child may be heir to a vast estate, he has no more to do with it until he is of age, than a servant has. If he should never come of age, then he would never actually enter upon his inheritance. He would have lived all his life as a servant, so far as any share in the inheritance is concerned. Now for

The Application

“So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world.” If we look ahead to the fifth verse, we shall see that the state here known as “children” is that before we receive “the adoption of sons.” It represents the condition before we were redeemed from the curse of the law, that is, before we were converted. It does not, therefore, mean children of God, as distinguished from worldlings, but the “children” of whom the apostle speaks in Eph. 4:14, “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” In short, it refers to us when we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

The Bondage

When we were children we were in bondage under the rudiments of the world. No one who has read the Bible needs to be told that the rudiments

of the world is “not after Christ.” Col. 2:8.

It is “after the tradition of men,” wholly fleshly, the life of the natural man who receives not the things of the Spirit of God, neither knows them. It is the same bondage that is described in Gal. 3:22-24, before faith came, when we were under the law, “under sin.” It is the condition of men “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Eph. 2:12. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.” 1 John 2:16, 17.

All Men Possible Heirs

It may be asked, “If such is the condition of those here referred to as ‘children,’ how can they be spoken of as heirs?” The answer is plain. It is on the principle that it is not manifest who constitute

the seed, until the harvest. God has not cast off the human race; therefore since the first man created was called “the son of God,” it follows that all men are heirs in the sense that they are in their minority. As already learned, “before faith came,” altho all were wanderers from God, we were kept under the law, guarded by a severe master, “shut up,” in order that we might be led to accept the promise. What a blessed thing it is that God counts even the ungodly, those who are in the bondage of sin, as His children! Wandering, prodigal sons, but still children. This probationary life is given us for the purpose of giving us a chance to acknowledge Him as Father, and to become sons indeed.

“The Fullness of the Time”

Christ came in the fullness of time. A parallel statement to this is found in Rom. 5:6: “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” But the death of Christ serves for those who live now and for those who lived before He was manifested in the flesh in Judea, just as well as for the men who lived at that time. His

death made no more change eighteen hundred years ago than it did four thousand years ago. It had no more effect on the men of that generation than on the men of any other generation. It is once for all, and, therefore, has an equal effect on every age. “The fulness of time” was the time foretold in prophecy, when the Messiah should be revealed; but the redemption was for all men in all ages. If it had been God’s plan that He should have been revealed in this century, or even not until the last year before the close of time, it would have made no difference with the Gospel. “He ever liveth,” and He ever has lived, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.”

“Born of a Woman”

God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, and therefore a veritable man. He lived an average lifetime on this earth in the flesh, and suffered all the ills and troubles that fall to the lot of “man that is born of woman.”

“Born under the Law”

Being born of a woman, He was necessarily born under the law, for such is the condition of all mankind, and “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. 2:17. He takes everything on Himself. “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He redeems us by coming into our place literally, and taking our load off our shoulders. “Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21, R.V. In the fullest sense of the word, and to a degree that is seldom thought of when the expression is used, He became man’s substitute. That is, He permeates our being, identifying Himself so fully with us that everything that touches or affects us touches and affects Him. If we will but recognize and acknowledge the fact,

then we drop out entirely, so that it is “not I, but Christ.” Thus we cast our cares on Him, not by picking them up and with an effort throwing them on Him, but by humbling ourselves into the nothingness that we are, so that we leave the burden resting on Him alone. Thus we see already how it is that He came

“To Redeem Them That Were under the Law”

He does it in the most practical and real way. Whom does He redeem?—“Them that were under the law.” We can not refrain from referring for a moment to the idea that some have that this expression, “to redeem them that were under the law,” has a mere local application. They would have it that it means that Christ freed the Jews from the necessity of offering sacrifices, etc. Well, suppose we take it as referring only to the Jews, and especially to those who lived at the time of His first advent; what then?—Simply this, that we shut ourselves off from any place in the plan of redemption. If it was only the Jews that were under the law, then it was only the Jews that Christ came

to redeem. Ah, we would not like to be left out, when it comes to the matter of redemption! Then we must acknowledge that we are, or were before we believed, “under the law;” for Christ came to redeem none but those who were under the law. “Under the law,” as we have already seen, means condemned by the law as transgressors. But the law condemns none but those who are amenable to it, and who ought to keep it. Therefore, since Christ redeems us from the law,—from its condemnation,—it follows that He redeems us to a life of obedience to it.

“That We Might Receive the Adoption of Sons”

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” 1 John 3:2. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12. This is an altogether different state from that described in the third verse as “children.” In that state we were “a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord.” Isa. 30:9. Believing on Jesus, and receiving the adoption of

sons, we are described “as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” 1 Peter 1:14. Christ said, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Ps. 40:8. Therefore, since He becomes our substitute, as described in the last paragraph but one, literally taking our place, not instead of us, but becoming us, and living our life in us and for us, it necessarily follows that the same law must be within our hearts when we receive the adoption of sons.

The Spirit the Badge of Sonship

Christ as the only-begotten Son of God was filled with the Spirit. If we yield to the same Spirit, then we are His brethren indeed; for the Spirit is the life; “there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.” Then if we have the Spirit, we have the blood; and if we have the same blood, then we are blood relations,—sons of God.

“If a Son, Then an Heir”

When the prodigal son was wandering from the father's house, he differed nothing from a servant, because he was a servant, doing the most menial drudgery. In that condition he came back to the old homestead, feeling that he deserved no better place than that of a servant. But the father saw him while he was yet a long way off, and ran and met him, and received him as a son, and therefore as an heir, altho he had forfeited all right to heirship. So we have forfeited our right to be called sons, and have squandered away the inheritance; yet God receives us in Christ as sons indeed, and gives us the same rights and privileges that Christ has. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the

Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” He is doubly “our Father.” “And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

Chapter 14

Bond-Servants and Freemen Part 1

Galatians 4:7-31; 5:1

The fourth chapter of Galatians contains a great deal of personal matter which is interesting as showing the apostle Paul's zeal and tenderness, but which for the purpose of our study may be summarized in a few words. The thirteenth verse lets us know that he was in great bodily affliction when he first preached the Gospel to the Galatians, and the fifteenth verse seems to indicate that his eyes were specially affected. His deep affliction may have had much to do with the vigor with which he preached the Gospel to them, causing them to see Christ crucified; for he tells us: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in

distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Cor. 12:9, 10. We see that the brethren had conceived a deep love for him, because of the blessedness which they experienced through his preaching, and to this he appeals. He assures them that in their departure from the faith they have not injured him at all; he is not troubled over their disaffection towards him, but over their falling away from Christ.

With this introduction we may proceed with the study, beginning with verse 7, the one with which we closed our last week's lesson, and skipping from verse 11 to verse 21.

The Scripture

“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again

to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a

bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Gal.

4:7–5:1.

Heathen Bondage

“At that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods.” Gal. 4:8, R.V. The Galatians had been heathen, worshiping idols, in bondage to horrible and degrading superstitions. Bear in mind that this bondage is the same as that which is spoken of in the preceding chapter,—they were “shut up” under the law. It was the very same bondage in which all unconverted persons are, for in the second and third chapters of Romans we are told that “there is no difference; for all have sinned.” The Jews themselves, who did not know the Lord by personal experience, were in the same bondage,—the bondage of sin. “Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin.” John 8:34, R.V. And “he that committeth sin is of the devil.” 1 John 3:8. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.” 1 Cor. 10:20. But we ourselves once walked “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the

power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2), and we “were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another” (Titus 3:3, R.V.). So we also were “in bondage to them which by nature are no gods.” The meaner the master, the worse the bondage. What language can depict the horror of being in bondage to corruption itself?

In Love with Bondage

“Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?” Is it not strange that men should be in love with chains? Christ has proclaimed “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isa. 61:1), saying to the prisoners, “Go forth,” and to them that are in darkness, “Show yourselves” (Isa. 49:9); yet men who have heard these words, and have actually come forth, and have seen the light of “the Sun of Righteousness,” and have

tasted the sweets of liberty, actually turn round and go back into their prison, submit to be bound with their old chains, even fondling them, and labor away at the hard treadmill of sin. Who has not had something of that experience? It is no fancy picture. It is a fact that men can come to love the most revolting things, even death itself; for Wisdom says, "All they that hate Me love death." Prov. 8:36. In reading the Epistle to the Galatians, we are reading a perfectly human experience. Would that to every reader it might be his own experience to the end of the book. Let us not stop here.

Observing Heathen Customs

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." This was an evidence of their bondage. "Ah," says some one, "they had gone back to the old Jewish Sabbath; that was the bondage against which Paul would warn us!" How strange it is that men have such an insane hatred of the Sabbath, which the Lord Himself gave to the Jews in common with all other people on the earth, that

they will seize upon one word that they can turn against it, altho in order to do so they must shut their eyes to all the words that are around it. Anybody who reads the Epistle to the Galatians, and thinks as he reads, must know that the Galatians were not Jews. They had been converted from heathenism. Therefore previous to their conversion they had never had anything to do with any religious custom that was practiced by the Jews. They had nothing whatever in common with the Jews. Consequently, when they turned again to the “weak and beggarly elements” to which they were willing again to be in bondage, it is evident that they were going a good deal farther back than to any Jewish practice. They were going back to their old heathen customs. “But were not the men who were perverting them Jews?”—Yes, they were. But remember this one thing, when you seek to turn a man away from Christ to some substitute for Christ, you can not tell where he will end. You can not make him stop just where you want him to. If a converted drunkard loses faith in Christ, he will take up his drinking habits as surely as he lives, even tho the Lord may have taken the

appetite away from him. So when these “false brethren”—Jewish opposers of “the truth of the Gospel” as it is in Christ,—succeeded in seducing the Galatians from Christ, they could not get them to stop with Jewish ceremonies. No; they inevitably drifted back to their old heathen superstitions.

Forbidden Practices

Read the tenth verse again, and then turn to Deut. 18:10 and read: “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of time, or an enchanter, or a witch.” Now read what the Lord says to the heathen who would shield themselves from just judgment that is about to come upon them: “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.” Isa. 47:13. Here we see that the very things to which the Galatians were returning, were forbidden by the Lord when

He brought Israel out of Egypt. Now we might as well say that when God forbade these things He was warning the Israelites against keeping the Sabbath, as to say that Paul was upbraiding the Galatians for keeping it, or that he had any reference to it whatever. God forbade these things at the very time when He gave the commandment concerning Sabbath-keeping. So far back into their old ways had the Galatians gone that Paul was afraid lest all his labor on them had been in vain.

Desiring to be Under the Law

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” After what we have already had, there will be no one to come with the objection that to be under the law can not be a very deplorable condition, else the Galatians would not have desired to be under it. Ah, “there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”! Prov. 14:25. How many there are who love ways that everybody except themselves can see are leading them direct to death; yes, there are many who, with their eyes

wide open to the consequences of their course, will persist in it, deliberately choosing “the pleasures of sin for a season,” rather than length of days! To be “under the law” of God is to be condemned by it as a sinner chained and doomed to death, yet many millions besides the Galatians have loved the condition, and still love it. Ah, if they would only hear what it says! “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

“What Saith the Law?”

It saith, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” To what place shall the wicked bond-servant be cast out?—“Into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Therefore, “remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded

unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” Mal. 4:1, 4. All who are under the law, whether they be called Jews or Gentiles, Christians or Mohammedans, are in bondage to Satan,—in the bondage of transgression and sin,—and are to be cast out. “Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. And the bond-servant abideth not in the house forever; the son abideth forever.” Thank God, then, for “the adoption of sons.”

Chapter 15

Bond-Servants and Freemen Part 2

Galatians 4:7-31; 5:1

“Two Sons”

Those false teachers would persuade the brethren that in turning from whole-hearted faith in Christ and trusting to works which they themselves could do, they would become children of Abraham, and so heirs of the promises. They forgot that Abraham had two sons. I myself have talked to a Jew according to the flesh, who did not know that Abraham had more than one son; and there are many Christians who seem to think that to be descended from Abraham, after the flesh, is all-sufficient to insure one a share in the promised inheritance. “They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

Rom. 9:8. Now of the two sons of Abraham, one was born after the flesh, and the other was by promise, born of the Spirit. “By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had promised.” Heb. 11:11, R.V. Hagar was an Egyptian slave. The children of a slave woman are always slaves, even though their father be a freeman; and so Hagar could bring forth children only to bondage. But long before Ishmael was born, the Lord had plainly signified to Abraham, when he wished that his servant Eliezer might be his heir, that it was not a bond-servant, even though born in his house, that He had promised him, but a free-born son, a son born of a freewoman.

“These Are the Two Covenants”

What are the two covenants?—The two women, Hagar and Sarah; for we read that Hagar is Mount Sinai, “which gendereth to bondage.” That is, just as Hagar could not bring forth any other kind of children than slaves, so the law, even the law that God spoke from Sinai, can not beget

freemen. It can do nothing but hold them in bondage. “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The same is true of the covenant from Sinai, for it consisted merely of the promise of the people to keep that law, and had therefore no more power to make them free than the law itself had. Nay, rather, it “gendered to bondage,” since their making it was simply a promise to make themselves righteous by their own works, and man in himself is “without strength.”

**“Then did not God Himself lead them
into bondage?”**

Not by any means, since He did not induce them to make that covenant at Sinai; 430 years before that time He had made a covenant with Abraham, which was sufficient for all purposes. That covenant was confirmed in Christ, and therefore was a covenant from above. See John 8:23. It promised righteousness as a free gift of God through faith. All the miracles that God had wrought in delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage were but demonstrations of His

power to deliver them from the bondage of sin. Yes, the deliverance from Egypt was itself a demonstration not only of God's power, but also of His desire to lead them from the bondage of sin, that bondage in which the covenant from Sinai holds men, because Hagar, who is the covenant from Sinai, was an Egyptian. So when the people came to Sinai, God simply referred them to what He had already done, and then said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." Ex. 19:5. To what covenant did He refer?—Evidently to the only covenant in existence, the one made with Abraham. If they would simply keep God's covenant, that is, God's promise, they would be a peculiar treasure unto God, for God, as the possessor of all the earth, was able to do with them all that He had promised. The fact that they in their self-sufficiency rashly took the whole responsibility upon themselves, does not prove that God led them into making that covenant, but the contrary. He was leading them out of bondage, not into it; and the apostle plainly tells us

that that covenant was nothing but bondage.

Note the statement which the apostle makes when speaking of the two women, Hagar and Sarah, “These are the two covenants.” So then the two covenants existed in every essential particular in the days of Abraham. Even so they do to-day; for the Scripture says now as well as then, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” We see, then, that the two covenants are not matters of time, but of condition. Let no one flatter himself that he is not under the old covenant because the time for that is passed. The time for that is passed only in the sense that “the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.” 1 Peter 4:3.

Difference Between the Two

The difference is just the difference between a freewoman and a slave. Hagar’s children, no matter how many she might have had, would have been

slaves, while those of Sarah would necessarily be free. So the covenant from Sinai holds all who adhere to it in bondage “under the law;” while the covenant from above gives freedom, not freedom from obedience to the law, but freedom from disobedience to it. The freedom is not found away from the law, but in the law. Christ redeems from the curse, which is the transgression of the law. He redeems us from the curse, that the blessing may come on us, and the blessing is obedience to the law. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.” Ps. 119:1. This blessedness is freedom. “I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy precepts.” Ps. 119:45.

The difference between the two covenants may be put briefly thus: In the covenant from Sinai we ourselves have to do with the law alone, while in the covenant from above, we have the law in Christ. In the first instance it is death to us, since the law is sharper than any two edged sword, and we are not able to handle it without fatal results; but in the second instance we have the law “in the hand of a Mediator.” In the one case it is what we

can do; in the other case it is what the Spirit of God can do. Bear in mind that there is not the slightest question in the whole Epistle to the Galatians as to whether or not the law should be kept. The only question is, How shall it be done? Is it to be our own doing, so that the reward shall not be of grace but of debt? or is it to be God working in us both to will and to do of His good-pleasure?

The Freedom of the Spirit

Sarah answers to the covenant which is from above, because she is free. But the freedom which that covenant gives is the freedom of the Spirit, for Isaac was born of the Spirit. See Gal. 4:29. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor. 3:17. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Gal. 5:18. But this does not mean that the Spirit gives one license to break the law; for "the law is spiritual." Rom. 7:14. There is no liberty in sin, and "sin is the transgression of the law." So the liberty of the covenant from above is that perfect liberty that belongs alone to those who

are lawabiding. We become law-abiding only by having the law written in our hearts by the Spirit.

“Stand Fast, Therefore”

Stand where?—“In the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” And what freedom is that?—It is the freedom of Christ Himself, whose delight was in the law of the Lord, because it was in His heart. Ps. 40:8. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rom. 8:2. We stand only by faith.

Let it not be imagined that there is any trace of bondage in this freedom. It is real liberty. It is the liberty of soul, liberty of thought, as well as liberty of action. It is not that we are simply given the ability to keep the law, but we are given the mind that finds delight in doing it. It is not that we comply with the law because we see no other way of escape from punishment; that would be galling bondage. It is from such bondage that God’s covenant releases us. No; the promise of God, when accepted, puts the mind of the Spirit into us,

so that we find the highest pleasure in obedience to all the precepts of God's Word. The soul is as free as a bird soaring above the mountain-tops. It is the glorious liberty of the children of God, who have the full range of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of God's universe. It is the liberty of those who do not have even to be watched, but who can be trusted anywhere, since their every step is but the movement of God's own holy law. Why be content with bondage, when such limitless freedom is yours? The prison doors are open; walk out into God's freedom.

"Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come. Jesus, I come.
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

"Out of earth's sorrows, into Thy balm,
Out of life's storm, and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

"Out of unrest and arrogant pride.

Jesus, I come. Jesus, I come.
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of myself to dwell in Thy love.
Out of despair into raptures above.
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee.”

Chapter 16

Christ-Given Freedom

Galatians 5:1

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Gal. 5:1. Altho we included this verse in our study last week, it contains quite enough for our entire study this week, and even more. In order that we may see how Christ makes free, we will consider

A Practical Example

in His earthly ministry.

“And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman,

thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” Luke 13:10-13.

Then when the hypocritical ruler of the synagogue complained because Jesus did this miracle on the Sabbath, He referred to how each one would loose his ox or ass from the stall, and lead him to water, and then said:—

“And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

A Parallel

Note these two points about this woman: She was bound by Satan; and she had a spirit of infirmity, or lack of strength.

Now note how accurately this describes our condition before we meet Christ.

1. We are bound by Satan. “Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin,” John 8:34 R.V. “He that committeth sin is of the devil,” 1 John 3:8. “His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.” Prov. 5:22. Sin is the cord with which Satan binds us.

2. We have a spirit of infirmity, and can in nowise lift ourselves up, or free ourselves from the chains that bind us. It was when we were “without strength” that Christ died for us. Rom. 5:6. Now these two words, “without strength,” are translated from the very same word that is rendered “infirmity” in the account of the woman whom Jesus healed. She was “without strength.” To be without strength means to have no strength at all. That is our condition.

What Jesus Does for Us

What now does Jesus do for us?—He takes the weakness, and gives us in return His strength. “We have not an High Priest which can not be touched

with the feeling of our infirmities.” Heb. 4:15. “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Matt. 8:17. He becomes all that we are, in order that we may become all that He is. He was “born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” He hath delivered us from the curse, being made a curse for us, that the blessing might come to us. Altho He knew no sin, He was made “to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21.

Why He Does It

Why did Jesus make that woman free from her infirmity?—In order that she might walk at liberty. Certainly it was not in order that she might continue of her own free-will to do that which before she was obliged to do. And why does He make us free from sin?—In order that we may live free from sin.

What is sin?

“Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. To be a bond-servant of sin, therefore, and in nowise able to lift ourselves up, on account of infirmity, is to be unable to keep from transgressing the law. That is, it is to be unable to keep it. Why does Christ make us free?—Only in order that we may walk in the law blameless. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” Rom. 8:3, 4. He certainly does not deliver us in order that we may go on transgressing the law.

Free from the Law

“But,” some one will object, “it says somewhere that we are delivered from the law.” Yes, it does; and that is just what we are talking about. It is what we have been studying in the third and fourth chapters of Galatians. Christ was

made under the law, to redeem us from under the law. Before faith came, we were under the law, shut up in prison. The law was our jailer; for “the strength of sin is the law.” 1 Cor. 15:56. “The law works wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression.” Rom. 4:15. The law is our accuser before God. It charges us with having transgressed its holy precepts, and shut us up in prison, criminals condemned to death. How only can we get free from its condemnation?—Only by being able to show that we have the righteousness which it demands. This we get in the life of Christ. He covers us with the robe of righteousness. He puts righteousness not only on us, but in us, so that the law can find no fault in us, because in Christ there is no fault. Then the law lets us go free from prison. Now we are on good terms with the law. That which before was our accuser, is now our friend; it witnesses to our righteousness in Christ.

But we shall have more of this at another time; what we wish now to consider a little further is how wondrously and how really Christ makes us free from the spirit of infirmity that keeps us from

walking uprightly, according to the law of God. We can not tell how He does it; He alone knows how it is done, because He alone has the power; but we may know the reality of it.

We have already read that it is Satan that binds us with the cords of sin. Now read further: “He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. 2:14, 15.

The Means Used

By what means is it done?—By His word and touch. He said, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity,” and laid His hand on her; and immediately she was straight. Faith in His Word

makes the glorious freedom a reality to us. We must know also that He touches us. It is true, whether we know it or not; for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Mark, He is now, even while He is High Priest in heaven, touched with the feeling of our weakness. He feels what we feel. Therefore He must be in the closest touch with us.

The Freedom Already Ours

Pay special attention to the words of Jesus to the woman, uttered while she was yet bound down, and unable to lift herself up: “Thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” “Thou art loosed,”—present tense. That is just what He says to us. To every captive He has proclaimed deliverance. “The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raises up all those that be bowed down.” Ps. 145:14. There is not a single soul that is bowed down with the weight of sin, which Satan hath bound on him, whom Christ does not lift up. Let the message be sounded far and wide. Let every soul hear it, that Christ has given deliverance to every captive. Thousands will rejoice at the news.

Faith Grasps Facts

Does anybody doubt it? Let me prove it to you. You will agree that we are made free by faith. When faith comes, we are no longer in prison. That is what we have learned in the third chapter of Galatians. But we can not believe a thing that is not so. Faith lays hold of acts, things actually accomplished, and nothing else. Faith does not make facts, it only believes them. We do not make a thing so by believing it; we believe it, or at least ought to, because it is so. If it were not so before we are called upon to believe it, there would be nothing for us to believe. Therefore the fact that we get freedom in Christ by faith, and that anybody can have the same freedom by faith, proves that the freedom is already given to all. They have only to grasp it, and walk at liberty. Our part is to say with the psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; ... Thou hast loosed my bonds." Ps. 116:16. Don't go to arguing with the Lord, and saying that you can not walk straight. He says that you are loosed, and that is enough. Hold fast to His words in the face

of the devil, and you will find that they will never fail you. The word which says, “Thou art free,” is the word that keeps you free. Don’t let it go from your mind.

The Way, the Life

Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6. There is no other way, except the way that leads to death, and that we do not care to have anything to do with. Now read the words of the Lord by the psalmist: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.” Ps. 119:1-3. What, then, is the way of the Lord?—It is the law of God, for the law is His life. Broken, it is death to us; kept, as it can be only in Christ, it is life and peace. It is “the perfect law of liberty.” In Christ, it is “the law of the spirit of life.” Rom. 8:2. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Sin, transgression of the law, is

bondage; righteousness, which we find in Christ, who is the perfection of the law, is life, liberty, and peace.

Chapter 17

Faith Which Works by Love

Galatians 5:1-13

Since the last two lessons have included quite a general review of what has been passed over, we will proceed at once with

The Lesson for the Week

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which works by love. Ye

did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you. For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Gal. 5:1-13.

There is nothing in this portion of Scripture that is difficult for one who has followed the study of the Epistle closely from the beginning. Therefore the whole of this study will really be little more than a review. Let us consider some of the supposedly difficult expressions.

Circumcision Opposed to Christ

When the apostle says that Christ is no profit to

those who are circumcised, it is easy to understand that he is not referring to the mere fact that one had been circumcised, for he himself had undergone that rite. Moreover, he preached Christ to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. We must recall the circumstances which called out this Epistle. There were those who were persuading the new converts that belief in Christ was not sufficient for salvation, but that they could not be saved if they were not also circumcised. This, it will be seen, was in reality a rejection of Christ; for if Christ be not accepted as a complete Redeemer, He is not accepted at all. That is to say, if Christ be not accepted for what He is, He is rejected. He cannot be other than what He is. Christ is not divided; and He does not share with any other person or thing the honor of being Saviour. Therefore it is easy to see that if any one were circumcised with a view to receiving salvation thereby, that would show absence of faith in Christ as the only and the all-sufficient Saviour of mankind.

From the statement that Christ is of no profit to those who are circumcised, we see that it means a

rejection of Him; for Christ is always the same, and is always a perfect Saviour. The only ones in the world to whom He is nothing are those who do not accept Him. So, then, what the apostle really says is this: If you are circumcised for salvation, you reject Christ and His salvation.

What Circumcision Means

This has been stated in the language of the Scripture so many times that we will do no more here than merely to refer to the passages. Read again Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11, where it appears very plainly that circumcision means the righteousness of the law. As God gave it to Abraham, it was a sign that he already had righteousness through faith in Christ; but as it became perverted by the Jews, it came to signify in their minds the fact that they themselves were doers of the law. And finally it came to be considered as a substitute for the doing of the law, or as conferring the righteousness of the law. God gave it as a sign of faith in Christ; they perverted it into a substitute for faith. So when a Jew boasted in his circumcision, he was

boasting of his own righteousness. This is shown by Gal. 5:4: “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” This is no disparagement of the law, but of man’s ability to keep the law. It is the glory of the law that it is so holy, and its requirements are so great, that no man is able to attain to the perfection of it. Only in Christ is the righteousness of the law ours; and true circumcision is to worship God in Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to put no confidence in the flesh. Phil. 3:3.

A Debtor to the Law

“For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.”

“There!” exclaims some one, “that shows that the law is a thing to be avoided; for Paul says that those who are circumcised have got to do the whole law; and he warns them not to be circumcised.”

Not quite so hasty, my friend. Stick a little more closely to the text. Read it again, and you will see that the bad thing is not the law, nor the doing of the law, but that the thing to be avoided is being a debtor to the law. Is there not a vast difference? It is a good thing to have food to eat and clothes to wear, but it is a sorrowful thing to be in debt for these necessary things. Sadder yet is it to be in debt for them, and yet to lack them.

“The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Rom. 7:12.

What does one understand by “a debtor”?—One who owes something. Then one who is in debt to the law, owes the law righteousness and holiness. But what one owes is what he ought to pay. Therefore this scripture teaches us that one ought to do the law. No one ought to be in debt to it, but the only way we can avoid being in debt to it is to do it.

If one is debtor to do the whole law, that shows

that while he ought to do it all, he has not done any portion of it. So then we are forcibly taught by this scripture that whoever seeks righteousness by his own efforts, and not by Christ, has no righteousness at all. But the fact that by rejection of Christ one is a debtor to do the whole law, shows that by acceptance of Christ one yields to the law all that it demands, and satisfies it in very particular.

“The Hope of Righteousness”

“For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

Don't pass this verse by without reading it more than once, or you will think that it says something that it does not say. And as you read it, think of what you have already learned about the promise of the Spirit.

Don't imagine that this verse teaches that, having the Spirit, we must wait for righteousness. Not by any means; the Spirit brings righteousness.

When He is come, He will convince the world of sin and of righteousness. John 16:8. Whoever therefore receives the Spirit, has the conviction of sin, and has also the righteousness which the Spirit shows him that he lacks, and which the Spirit alone can bring.

What is the righteousness which the Spirit brings?—It is the righteousness of the law; this we know, “for we know that the law is spiritual.” Rom. 7:14.

What, then, about the “hope of righteousness,” for which we wait through the Spirit? Notice that it does not say that we through the Spirit hope for righteousness, but that we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, that is, the hope which the possession of righteousness brings. Let us briefly go over this matter in detail. It will not take long, for we have already studied it, and all that we have to do is to refresh our minds.

1. The Spirit of God is “the Holy Spirit of promise”—not the Spirit promised, but the

Spirit the possession of which insures to us the promise of God.

2. That which God has promised to us, as children of Abraham, is an inheritance. The Holy Spirit is the earnest or pledge, of this inheritance until the purchased possession is redeemed and bestowed upon us. Eph. 1:13, 14.
3. This inheritance that is promised is the new heavens and the new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:13.
4. The Spirit brings righteousness; for the Spirit is Christ’s representative, the means by which Christ Himself, who is our righteousness, comes to dwell in our hearts. John 14:16-18.
5. Therefore the hope which the Spirit brings is the hope which the possession of righteousness brings, namely, the hope of an inheritance in the kingdom of God, the earth made new.
6. The righteousness which the Spirit brings to us

is the righteousness of the law of God, which by the Spirit is written in our hearts, instead of on tables of stone. Rom. 2:29; 2 Cor. 3:3.

7. The sum of the whole matter, therefore, is this, that if we will wholly distrust ourselves, and will acknowledge that in us there dwelleth no good thing, and that consequently no good thing can come from us; and so, instead of thinking ourselves so powerful that we can do the law, will allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, that thus we may be filled with the righteousness of the law, we shall have living hope dwelling in us. The hope of the Spirit—the hope of righteousness by faith—has no element of uncertainty in it; it is positive assurance.

Working Faith

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

The word here rendered “availeth” is the same word that is rendered “able” in Luke 13:24; Acts 15:10; 6:10. In Phil. 4:13 it is rendered “can do.” The statement, therefore, amounts to this: Circumcision is not able to do anything, neither is uncircumcision; but faith alone, which works by love, can do anything. This faith which works by love is found only in Christ Jesus.

But what is it that there is talk about doing?— Nothing else than the law of God. No man can do it, whatever his state or condition. One may boast of his circumcision, and another may boast of his uncircumcision, but both are alike vain. By the law of faith boasting is excluded (Rom. 3:27); for since the faith of Christ alone can keep the righteousness of the law, there is no chance for us to tell what we have done.

“All to Christ I owe.”

Liberty to Ser ve, Not to Sin

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty;

only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh; but by love serve one another.”

The two preceding chapters tell about bondage, imprisonment. Before faith comes, we are shut up under sin, debtors to the law. The faith of Christ sets us free, but as we are set at liberty, the admonition is given us, “Go, and sin no more.” We have been set at liberty from sin, not at liberty to sin. How many make a mistake here! Many sincere people imagine that in Christ we are at liberty to ignore the law, and to set it at defiance, forgetting that the transgression of the law is sin. 1 John 3:4. To serve the flesh is to commit sin, “because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Rom. 8:7. So when the apostle exhorts us not to use our liberty for an occasion of the flesh, he simply warns us not to misuse the liberty which Christ gives us, and to bring ourselves into bondage again by transgressing the law. Instead of this, we should by love serve one another; for, as we shall learn in our next lesson, “all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love

thy neighbor as thyself.”

The substance of the whole exhortation is, Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Not dead in sin, but dead to sin and alive unto righteousness.

Chapter 18

Love, the Fulfilling of the Law

Galatians 5:13-15

Our lesson in Galatians has been largely on the subject of liberty. We have had presented to us the condition of bondage in which all men find themselves by nature. Then we saw the liberty which Christ gives, namely, freedom from sin. Being made free from sin means at the same time to be made free from the law, since when we cease to sin we come into harmony with the law, and it no longer holds us prisoners. This is a most desirable state, and therefore we have the exhortation to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

Then we are again warned against the presumption of thinking that we can by any works of our own satisfy the law, and are shown that any such attempt is a complete rejection of Christ, and therefore leaves us wholly in sin,—in debt to the

law in every particular. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Gal. 5:6. A person is either circumcised or uncircumcised. Those two words cover every possible condition of mankind. Therefore the statement is that there is no power in humanity, under any circumstances whatever, to do the law, but that the law is fulfilled only by faith, working by love. And this brings us to the

Lesson for the Week

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Gal. 5:13-15.

What Is Love

Since the whole law is fulfilled by loving, it

follows that all we have to study at present is the nature of love. We can by no means hope to exhaust the subject, but we can in a few words consider some of the important features of love, which are commonly overlooked.

Love Means Service

Our text shows this: “By love serve one another.” It therefore means consideration of others, instead of one’s self. Jesus Christ, who had greater love than is known among men, said that He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matt. 20:28. Said He, “I am among you as He that serveth.” Luke 22:27. When He came to this earth, He “took upon Him the form of a servant.” Phil. 2:7. He did not act the hypocrite. He did not appear to be something that He was not. All that He changed was His form. He did not need to change anything else; for He was already a servant. He was in the form of a King, even the King of kings; and if He had come to the earth in that form, everybody would have been so overawed, not to

say dazzled by the brightness of His glory, that they could not have appreciated His character. Therefore He changed His form, so as to appear like a servant, so that the world might see that, altho He is Lord and Master, He is also Servant, and that the depth of His service is measured by the greatness of His power as King.

Love Is Unselfishness

This follows from the foregoing; for since love means service, and service means the doing of something for others, it is evident that love takes no thought of itself, and that he who loves has no thought but of how he may bless others. So we read, “Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil.” 1 Cor. 13:4, 5, R.V.

A Deplorable Error

It is just on this vital point that everybody in

the world is making or has made a mistake. Happy are they who have found out their mistake, and have come to the understanding and practice of true love. We have seen that love means unselfishness. “Love seeketh not her own.” Therefore self-love is not love at all, in the right sense of the word. It is only a base counterfeit. Yet the most of that which in the world is called love, is not really love for another, but is love of self. Even that which should be the highest form of love known on earth, the love which is used by the Lord as a representation of His love for His people,—the love of husband and wife,—is more often selfishness than real love. Leaving out of the question, as unworthy of notice, marriages that are formed for the purpose of gaining wealth, or position in society, it is a fact, which all will recognize when their attention is called to it, that in nearly every case the parties to a marriage are thinking more of their own individual happiness than that of the happiness of the other. Of course this condition of things exists in varying degrees, and in proportion as real, unselfish love exists, is there real happiness; for it is a lesson that the world

is slow to learn that true happiness is found only when one ceases to seek for it, and sets about making it for others.

“Love Never Faileth”

These are the words of Inspiration, found in 1 Cor. 13:8. Here, again, is a test which shows that much that is called love is not love. Love never ceases. The statement is absolute, never. There is no exception, and no allowance made for circumstances. Love is not affected by circumstances. We often hear about one's love growing cold, but that is something that can never happen. Love is always warm, always flowing: nothing can freeze the fountain of love. Presently we shall better understand why this is so; but now it is sufficient for us to learn the fact that love is absolutely endless. We have the Word of the Lord for this, and that should be enough. We may reject love, we may refuse to love, we may drive love from our hearts; but the quality of love is unchanging.

Love Is Subjective

Perhaps this sub-title needs explanation. It means simply this, that love depends upon the individual who loves, and not upon the one loved. That is really to say, as already said, that love does not depend on circumstances. Love is impartial and unlimited. The word “neighbor” means whatever dwells near. Love, therefore, extends to everything with which it comes in contact. He who loves must necessarily love everybody.

Right here it may be objected that love does make distinctions, and the case of husband and wife, or of any of the members of a family, may be cited. But the objection does not hold, for the family relation, rightly understood, was instituted in order that by a union love might the more effectually be manifested to others. On the principle that strength is not merely doubled, but increased tenfold, by union, as shown by the statement that “one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight,” union multiplies the working value of love. If two persons, each of

whom has this unselfish love to all mankind, unite in love, then their union makes them ten times better able to serve others.” That is too high an ideal,” you say. Well, we are talking of a very great and high thing now; we are talking of love, absolute and unqualified. Poor, frail, needy human beings can not afford to accept anything but the best.

Why Love

Sometimes when a declaration of love is made, the loved one asks, “Why do you love me?” Just as if anybody could give a reason for love! Love is its own reason. If the lover can tell just why he loves another, then that very answer shows that he does not really love. See; whatever object he names as a reason for love, may sometime cease to exist, and then his supposed love ceases to exist; but “love never faileth.” Therefore love can not depend upon circumstances. So the only answer that can be given to the question as to why one loves, is, “Because”—because of love. Love loves, simply because it is love. Love is the quality of the

individual who loves, and he loves because he has love, irrespective of the character of the object.

“Love Is of God”

This statement, found in 1 John 4:7, is an explanation of all the difficulties that may appear in the foregoing statements. God exists, and no explanation of His existence can be given. Even so it is with love, for love is simply the life of God. “Every one that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.” 1 John 4:7, 8. He who does not love those who do not love him in return, does not love at all; for God’s love is the only real love, and He loves even those who hate Him. “We also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and His love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us.” Titus 3:3, 4, R.V. We naturally love those who are lovable, and

think that we can not be expected to love those who are hateful, and who hate us; but God loves the hateful, and those who hate Him. “If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?” “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matt. 5:46, 48.

Some one may quote 1 John 4:19, “We love Him, because He first loved us,” as at least a partial contradiction of the statement that love takes no account of the loveliness or unloveliness of the object, but loves simply because it exists, and must love, regardless of the object. But the text is only a repetition in another form of the fact that “love is of God.” Rightly translated, as in the Revised Version, the verse reads, “We love, because He first loved us.” But for the love of God, it would not be possible for any human being to love; just as, if it were not for the life of God, there would be no life in man.

Perfect Peace

From the statement in Rom. 13:10, that “love works no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law,” it will be seen that Christian love does not possibly admit of wars and fightings. Its possession makes it impossible for one to say, as is frequently said in these days, “I have been an advocate of peace and arbitration for twentyfive years, but”—and then go on to say that under such provocation as now exists war is welcomed. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor;” and no philosophy can ever make it appear that it does a man any good to kill him. When the soldiers asked John the Baptist what they should do, as followers of the Lamb of God, to whom he pointed, he replied, “Do violence to no man.” Luke 3:14. Those who asked were “soldiers on service,” as we see from the margin of the Revised Version. And the margin also gives as the alternative rendering of John’s answer, “Put no man in fear.” It would be a very mild war in which this command was followed. Love never does any harm to anybody; but love is active, since it is the life of God; therefore love is

always doing good. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, “went about doing good.”

How Possible

It appears that it is no light thing to fulfill the law of love. How is it possible for anybody to fulfill the law? With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Therefore this love is possible to man only as God dwells in the heart. “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Rom. 5:5. Love is of God, and that is why love is the fulfilling of the law of God. The Holy Spirit puts God’s own life of love into the heart, and because it is His life, it flows back to Him in love. The reader will notice that only love to one’s neighbor is spoken of in the text; but since love is of God, and one can not love at all unless the love of God is in the heart, it follows that whoever loves his fellow-men must necessarily love God. If one does not love his fellow-men, that is an evidence that the love of God does not dwell in him. 1 John 3:17, 18. “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath

seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” 1 John 4:20.

The Only Question

From all this it is evident that the only question that love can ask is, “How much can I do?” When the love of God is fully shed abroad in the heart, there is no such thing as seeking to do as little as possible. The one who has that love will not be seeking to minimize the law of God. He will not spend any time trying to show that a part of it, if not the whole, is abolished. In fact, he will not be negative at all. Negation, contradiction, never yet did anybody any good; but whatever does not do good does harm; and “love worketh no ill to his neighbor.” It is not by telling what you do not believe, and telling what is not true, that men are saved, but by “speaking the truth in love.” “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:3. His commandments are not grievous, because love is not grievous. Put up no barrier in your hearts to the love of God, and you

will find no difficulty with a single one of His commandments.

Chapter 19

The Flesh, the Spirit, and the Law

Galatians 5:16-26

We have seen that love is the fulfilling not the abolishing of the law. All the law is fulfilled in the Word, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” To say that love is a substitute for the keeping of the law, is to say that love is a substitute for itself. Men may say that they do not see very much love in the commandments, and that they do not seem to them to be the fulfilling of all love; but that tells nothing against the words of the Scriptures. It simply shows that they do not know the law of God, and that they are speaking evil of that which they know not. Let them but become acquainted with the Lord, and they would find that “His commandments are not grievous,” but are the

fullness of His own life of love.

The law is love; “but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” That is to say, If ye do not observe the law of love, then destruction will be your lot. They who despise the riches of God’s goodness and forbearance and love, which are all embodied in His law, whether they see it or not, are heaping up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and perdition of ungodly men. They who reject God’s law are simply working for their own destruction; and they who teach others to despise the law, are not only contributing to the destruction of those others, but are inviting those others to destroy them. When respect and love for God’s law are weakened, then are the flood-gates of violence and crime opened. But there is a brighter side, with grander possibilities, and it is presented in the

Lesson for the Week

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh

lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. ["They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." R.V.] If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Gal. 5:16-26.

The Flesh Opposed to the Spirit.

The flesh and the Spirit are in direct opposition. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.” There is no agreement whatever between the flesh and the Spirit. The Spirit strives with men in the flesh, seeking to control the individual to the glory of God; but so long as the Spirit is not fully yielded to, there is no peace, but continual war and unrest. He who is not controlled by the Spirit of God, is controlled by the sins of human nature, and is therefore a slave: “Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin.” John 8:34 R.V. On the contrary, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2 Cor. 3:17.

The Flesh Opposed to the Law

It is clear that there is no agreement between the flesh and the Spirit. What about the flesh and the law? Remembering that “carnal” means fleshly, read Rom. 8:7: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither

indeed can be.” So then the flesh and the law of God are in as direct opposition as are the flesh and the Spirit. Let us now read a little further, to see that this is not a three-cornered fight, but that the flesh is opposed to both the law and the Spirit, because both the law and the Spirit are one.

The Law and the Spirit in Unison

The story is really all told in Rom. 8:1-8, which we will read:—

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the

things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Note especially the items in the foregoing: (1) The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit. (2) The flesh and the Spirit are in direct and deadly opposition, as already noted. (3) To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Why?—Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God. (4) Thus we see that the opposition of the flesh to the Spirit is simply its opposition to the law of God. This follows as the natural consequence of the fact stated in Rom. 7:14: “The law is spiritual.”

Those Led by the Spirit Keep the Law

Having seen that those who follow the Spirit fulfill the righteousness of the law, read verse 18

in our lesson. “But if ye be led of the Spirit ye are not under the law.” That is to say, Those who fulfill the law, are not under the law. What a pity that there are so many who profess to be teachers of the Word, and who, more than all, make a special point of the baptism of the Spirit, who have so little spiritual discernment, and so little acquaintance with the Spirit of God, that they can use the words, “Ye are not under the law,” as meaning that the law of God is not to be observed! The only reason why any are not under the law, is that they are keeping it through the Spirit. To reject the law of God is to reject the Spirit, for “the law is spiritual.” Those who walk after the Spirit fulfill the law, and only such are not under the law.

Justified through the Spirit

It is not clear that there is in this not the slightest ground for any one’s thinking that men are justified by the works of the law, but the very opposite? It is the work of the Spirit of God that brings justification. But the works of the Spirit are perfect righteousness, even the righteousness of

the law. The Spirit is the living, personal representative of Christ. It is by the Spirit that Christ dwells in the heart. This makes a complete new life. The old life passes away, as the old man is crucified with Christ, so that the life that is now lived in the flesh is the life of Christ. The law has nothing against Him, since He has always done the will of the Father. There is therefore no condemnation to such an one. He is justified. Why?—Because no unrighteousness—no transgression of the law—is found in Him. Then he continues to walk in the law, not by his own power, but through the power of the Spirit. The justification is therefore all of God, and to Him alone is the glory. No man can boast, but he that glorifieth must glory in the Lord. Justification is not by the works of the law; but the very work “justification,” which means made righteous, is an assurance that the law is not ignored, but that the perfection of it is so put into and upon the believer that no fault can be found in him.

The Works of the Flesh.

Verses 19-21 contain a partial list of the works of the flesh. The list given is only a sample of them, closing with the words, “and such like.” Note that they are the works of the flesh, that is, they are such things as are natural to mankind.

Compare this list with that given by the Lord, in Mark 7:21-23, as things that come from within, from the heart of man.

Compare both these with the list given in Rom. 1:28-32, as the things done by the heathen, who did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They are the things that are done by all who do not know the Lord.

Then compare these lists of sins with the list given by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 3:1-5, of things that will be done in the last days by those who even have a form of godliness.

How can it be possible that men professing to

be Christians can be party to such horrible deeds?—The answer is easy, it is because they reject the law of the Lord. Worst of all is the fact that they are guilty of all these things even while making the very highest profession of godliness, in that they profess to be led by the Spirit. But since they have so little knowledge of the Spirit that they imagine that the reception of the Spirit gives them liberty to cast off the law of God, and trample it underfoot, they are abandoned to all sorts of sins. It cannot be otherwise. They use their liberty as an occasion to the flesh, and while taking liberty, and promising other people liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption. 2 Peter 2:19. O, the pity and the awfulness of it!

They Can Not Be Hid

The works of the flesh are manifest. They can not be hid. That which is in the heart must show itself in the life, no matter how much one may endeavor to conceal it. “An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil.” Luke 6:45. All the evil things that are

named in Gal. 5:19-21 are in every human heart by nature. No man is responsible for their being in his heart, for he is born with them. They form our inheritance from our ancestors, from Adam down. But we are responsible if they are allowed to remain in the heart; for the Spirit of God will utterly remove them if allowed free access.

But the righteousness of the Spirit is the righteousness of the law, and therefore whoever depreciates and rejects the law of God, or any part of it, thereby rejects the Spirit, no matter what his profession may be. So, altho he may for a time succeed in concealing the existence of the wickedness of his heart, not only from the world, but even from himself, it is sure sooner or later to manifest itself. Then when the law of God shall have been so preached in the demonstration of the Spirit that all have heard its claims, and the multitude have rejected it, will the Spirit leave them to their own desires, and then will be experienced the “perilous times” spoken of by the apostle, for all the earth will be filled with violence, even as it was in the days that were

before the flood.

“And Such Like”

Read once more that list of the works of the flesh. They are these: “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings.” “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” One would naturally think not, for it is a bad list. Yet in reading them, one is apt to overlook some of the things named, and to dwell only on what seem to be the worst ones, as adultery, murder, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft.

Those are quite universally regarded as out-breaking sins. But notice the words, “and such like.” That means that there are others in the same class, and moreover it means that all the things that are here named are identical in character. The Scripture tells us that hatred is murder. “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.” 1

John 3:15. Moreover, anger is also murder, as shown by the Saviour in Matt. 5:21, 22. Envy, which is so common, also contains murder in it.

But who regards emulation as so sinful? Isn't emulation encouraged everywhere? Are not children from their infancy taught to strive to surpass somebody else? Is not emulation fostered, not only by schools of all kinds, but also in the home, and in the church? So far from being regarded as sinful in the extreme, it is cultivated. And yet the Word of God assures us that it is of the same kind as adultery, fornication, murder, and drunkenness, and that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Is it not a fearful thing?

The love of self, the desire for the supremacy, is the source of all the other sins that are mentioned. Out of that have grown innumerable murders. And to think that many mothers are unconsciously training up their children to just such things, even while striving to bring them up properly, by saying: "Now see if you can not

behave better than so-and-so;” “See if you can not learn to read or to play better than such an one;” “See if you can not keep your clothes looking as nice as that one.” All such expressions, which are every-day words in thousands of households, are teaching emulation, and setting a false standard. The child is not taught to distinguish between the right and the wrong, and to love the right, but is simply trained to appear better than somebody else. That leads to deception, for all that is thought necessary is to present a better appearance than others, while the heart is corrupt. Those others may not be of very high character, and so the emulator is satisfied, even in this faulty exertion, with simply appearing better than some one who is himself very bad. Ah, the abominable works of the flesh are lurking where many least suspect them! The only remedy is the Spirit of God.

The Fruit of the Spirit

When the Spirit is given control, the works of the flesh will no longer be manifested, because the Spirit drives them out of the heart. “The fruit of the

Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” There is no room for emulation there. “Against such there is no law.” Why not?—Simply because these things are the result of obedience to the law through the Spirit. It is impossible for the natural man to possess these good things. It is impossible for us of ourselves to love those who despise us, or to suffer long and be kind. It is not possible for us to rejoice when we are ill treated, or even to rejoice when somebody else, moved by the spirit of emulation, surpasses us, and takes from us a prize which we coveted. But it is possible for the Spirit of God. What a blessed condition the one is in who possesses the fruit of the Spirit!

No Popery

“Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.” That is to say, Let us have done with emulations and strife. Emulation and strife are the natural outgrowth of self-righteousness, the exaltation of self above

God's law. This is the very essence of popery. If there were no emulation, no strife, there would be no pope. The Papacy,—the existence in the world of such a thing as a pope,—is the result of the strife for the supremacy among the early bishops. At first all bishops, or elders, or presbyters, or pastors, for all mean the same thing, were equal. "All ye are brethren," said Christ, and for a little while they lived as brethren. But soon there was a strife as to who should be the greatest and the streets of more than one city, Rome especially, ran with blood which was shed in these contest. The final result was the recognition of the bishops of Rome as supreme.

"But how can it be that so many acknowledge the pope's supremacy, if the popish spirit is inherent in human nature?" Thus: when the popish principle is admitted, some one must be chief, or else there will be a war of extermination. So the others unite in homage to the fortunate one, in hope that their turn may come next, or in the knowledge that they will at least be popes of lesser rank, exercising lordship over those who are

beneath them.

Wherever there is emulation, there is the Papacy; and wherever the Papacy is, there is every evil work. The Spirit of God casts out the Papacy from the individual human heart, by producing meekness, faith, goodness. He who knows that from self only evil can come, and that all good things come only from the Spirit, is made humble by that very knowledge. Knowing that he is nothing, he gives place to the Spirit, and the fruits of the Spirit grow in him. Such an one is truly happy, because he is, through the Spirit, “perfect and entire, lacking nothing.”

Chapter 20

The Law of Christ

Galatians 6:1-3, R.V.

A Few Preliminary Explanations

Hasty readers of the Epistle to the Galatians might think that there is a division in it, and that the latter part treats of practical, spiritual life, while the first part is devoted to theoretical doctrines. Such a conclusion would be a great error. No part of the Bible is theory; it is all fact. There is no part of the Bible that is not spiritual and practical. Moreover, it is all doctrine. Doctrine means teaching. Christ's talk to the multitudes on the mount is called doctrine, because "He opened His mouth and taught them." Some people express a sort of contempt for doctrine; they speak slightingly of it, as tho it belonged to the realm of abstruse theology, and not to practical, every day life. Such ones unconsciously do dishonor to the preaching of Christ, which was nothing else but

doctrine. That is to say, He always taught the people.

Sermonizing Not Doctrine

That which leads people into this error is a wrong use of the words. That which they call “doctrine,” and which they speak of as impractical, is not doctrine, but sermonizing. That is impractical, and has no place in the Gospel. No preacher of the Gospel ever “delivers a sermon.” If he does, it is because he chooses for a time to do something else besides preach the Gospel. Christ never delivered a sermon. Instead of that, He gave the people doctrine; that is to say, He taught them. He was “a Teacher sent from God.” So the Gospel is all doctrine; it is instruction in the life of Christ.

An Abuse

People quite generally misuse the Epistle to the Galatians. They treat it as tho it were a purely argumentative book. They use it merely to draw arguments from, with which to establish some

theory, or to demolish another's theory. Worse still, they even go to it to find authority for attacks upon the law of God, which is the law of Christ, since Christ is God, and the Father and the Son are one in all things. It is rare to find any one, even a real preacher of the Gospel, going to this Epistle for material for Gospel teaching. If they do, they use only the last portion of the fifth chapter, and a portion of the sixth. The rest they ignore, with the virtuous feeling that they can not waste time in disputes about the law. As tho the apostle Paul ever wasted time in such a thing! As tho it were a waste of time to preach that which the greatest of apostles took such pains to write under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost! As tho the apostle himself ever spent time after his conversion doing anything else but preach and write the Gospel!

The Gospel in Galatians

Recall the beginning of the Epistle. Remember that it was written to reclaim those who were departing from the Gospel of Christ, and from God, into a pretended Gospel, which led to perdition. It

was written that “the truth of the Gospel” might remain with us. Surely, then, it is a grave impeachment of the Spirit that guided Paul, to imply that he devoted the greater portion of the Epistle to something that is not practical Gospel. It is all Gospel, and nothing but Gospel.

The Law in the Gospel

And yet the Epistle does deal largely with the law. In fact, it deals with nothing else; for the real law of God, the law of liberty, is the life of Christ, “who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.” Acts 10:38. The law is righteousness, and righteousness is life. Disobedience to the law is death. “All have sinned,” and are therefore under the curse of the law; but “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” He received, so to speak, all the broken, ragged edges of the law in Himself, in order that through the creative power of His life, the law might come to us in its perfection, for the purpose for which it was designed, for it “was ordained to life.” Romans

7:10. Out of Christ, the law is a terror, a yoke of bondage, a ministration of death, because out of Him it is not kept; in Christ it is “not grievous,” but is peace and life, because in Him we are made to walk in the good works which God Himself has wrought for us.

The Law of Peace and Love

“Great peace have they which love Thy law; and nothing shall offend them.” Ps. 119:165. “O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” Isa. 48:18. “The law is spiritual,” and “to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Rom. 7:14; 8:6. Those who through the Gospel keep the law are kept in perfect peace, because it is in the Gospel of peace that the righteousness of God—the law—is revealed. Rom. 1:16, 17. Such ones are not “desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.” “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “Love worketh no ill to his

neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” It is only where men, by departing from the Gospel of Christ, transgress the law, that they bite and devour one another, and are consumed of one another. The fruit of the Spirit, against which there is no law, because it is the perfection of the law, is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” The Epistle to the Galatians was written for the purpose of restoring this Spirit in its readers. How natural, then, and how perfectly in harmony with the whole Epistle, are the opening words of the sixth chapter, which constitute our present lesson:—

“Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” Gal. 6:1-3, R.V.

The Gospel Means Restoration

The work of the Gospel is to restore. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Matt. 18:11-14.

Save the One.

Note the fact that the Lord represents His work by the case of the shepherd who seeks after the one sheep that has gone astray. The work of the Gospel is an individual work. Even tho under the preaching of the Gospel thousands accept it in one day, as the result of one discourse, it is because of its effect on each individual heart. When the preacher, in speaking to thousands, addresses each

one individually, then he is doing the work of Christ. So if a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness. No man's time is so precious that it is wasted when devoted to the salvation of one single person. Some of the most important and glorious truths that we have on record as uttered by Christ, were addressed to only one listener. He who looks after and cares for the single lambs of the flock, is a good shepherd.

Salvation Is from Sin

A fault, a trespass, is a sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." If any man be overpowered by temptation, and fall into sin, restore him, that is, bring him back into harmony with the law, and thus fulfil the law of Christ. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15. This He does by taking on Himself the sin, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." He bears the curse, that the blessing may come to us. He was made to be sin, "that we might be made the

righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor. 5:21. His name is Jesus, Saviour, because the work of His life is to save men from their sins. Those who are workers with Him must be devoted to the same thing. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law.” Rom. 3:31. The work of the Gospel minister is not to teach people that the law is abolished, but to bring them into harmony with it.

The Ministr y of Reconciliation

The law of God is love. “His commandments are not grievous.” Therefore there can be nothing of harshness in the work of reclaiming an erring one. “If thy brother sin, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” Matt. 18:15, R.V., margin. The object of showing a brother his faults is to gain him, to restore him, not to condemn him. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, but only as the Comforter. Whoever attempts this delicate work is to go in the spirit of meekness, which is the Spirit of Christ, who is meek and lowly in heart. He is to

go simply as Christ's representative, as the agent whom the Spirit of Christ uses. The words that he speaks are to be Christ's words, and not his own. It is to be Christ that goes, and nobody else. Then, whatever be the result, the work will have been done right. But let us beware of putting ourselves in Christ's place. We are not to do something, and then comfort ourselves or defend ourselves with the statement that we have done as He would have done. The work is God's work, and He must be allowed to do it in us.

Not Imputing unto Men their Trespases

Let us not forget the law of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." That is, we are to restore the erring by bearing their burdens, even as Christ bears the sins of the world. Let us look at this closely. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespases, and hath placed in us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as tho God were entreating by us." 2 Cor. 5:19, 20, R.V.,

margin. God does not impute to men their trespasses; He takes them on Himself. Christ was in all things made like His brethren, “that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. 2:17. He puts Himself absolutely in the sinner’s place, to the extent of taking all the sinner’s guilt on Himself. This is the way He reconciles. He calls us to look at Him, in the like situation with us, weak and tempted as we are. Thus He establishes a bond of sympathy, and having gained our confidence by not putting Himself above us, and looking on us with contempt, He shows us the way of salvation.

Salvation in Confession of Sin

The greatest part, therefore, of the work of saving souls is to show ourselves one with them. That is to say, it is in the confession of our own faults, that we save others. The man who feels himself without sin is not the man to restore the sinful. He who goes to one who is overtaken in any trespass, and says: “How in the world could

you ever do such a thing? I never did a thing like that in my life, and I can't see how anybody with any sense of self-respect could do so," might far better stay at home. God chose one Pharisee, and only one, to be an apostle, but he was not sent forth until he could acknowledge himself to be the chief of sinners. It is humiliating to confess sin. That is true, but the way of salvation is the way of the cross. It is only by the cross that Christ could be the Saviour of sinners. Therefore if we could share His joy, we must endure the cross, despising the shame. Remember this fact: It is only by confessing our own sins that we can save others from their sins; but whosoever confesses his own sins finds cleansing; thus we see that, while salvation is an individual matter, it has to do with more than one individual; our salvation is bound up with that of others. If we confess our sins, we shall be saved, and shall be the means of saving some one else.

Self-abasement.

“If a man thinketh himself to be something,

when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” Mark those words, “when he is nothing.” It does not say that we should not think ourselves to be something until we are something. No; it is a statement of the fact that we are nothing. Not merely a single individual, but all nations, are nothing before the Lord. If we ever at any time think ourselves to be something, we deceive ourselves. And we often do deceive ourselves, and thus mar the work of the Lord. Remember the law of Christ. Altho He was everything; He emptied Himself. He obliterated Himself, that the work of God might be done. “The servant is not greater than his lord.” God alone is great; “every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” God alone is true, but every man a liar. When we acknowledge this, and live in consciousness of it, then we are where the Spirit of God can fill us, and then God can work through us. The “man of sin” is he that exalteth himself. 2 Thess. 2:3, 4. The child of God is the one who humbles himself. Instead of fighting against God’s law, by maintaining that we are right, let us acknowledge that “the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good” (Rom.

7:12), that so we may find mercy, and salvation from our sins, and be made a blessing to others.

Chapter 21

Improving the Opportunity

Galatians 6:1-10

Although we have studied the first three verses of the sixth chapter of Galatians, we will for the sake of the connection include them in the text for this week, and without further review begin the study.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. 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

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:1-10.

Burden-Bearing

It can well be said that there is much in this portion of Scripture, as well as in others, which no one as yet understands, especially in verses 2 and 5, which, seem to be directly contrary to each other. One says that we should bear one another’s burdens, and the other says that every one shall bear his own burden. Without speculating upon what we do not know, we can find abundance of instruction in what is evident. Each one must have the Spirit of Christ, which is that of burden-bearing. He devoted His life to the service of others. But His own burdens He carried to God. He

did not ask others to carry them for Him. Even so it should be with us. If every one in the house of God, to say nothing of the world, acted according to this plan, how easy it would be to get on! There would really be no burdens for any one to bear. Each one thoughtful only of others, studying their burdens, that he might help them, would find his own burdens carried in turn by others. The only burden that any one would then carry would be Christ's burden, which He calls us to take, because it is light. Let us learn of Christ, who bore the burden of the world, and asked none to share it with Him; yet He found it easy and light. When we try to unload our burdens on others, we are always in trouble, always heavy-laden; but when we are wholly devoted to bearing the burdens of others, we find them light.

Communicating Good Things

“Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” There can be no doubt but that this refers primarily to temporal support. “The laborer is

worthy of his hire.” If a man gives himself wholly to the ministry of the Word, it is evident that the things necessary for his sustenance must come from those who are taught. But this by no means exhausts the meaning of the injunction. The one who is taught in the Word must communicate to the teacher “in all good things.” Mutual help is the burden of this chapter. “Bear ye one another’s burdens.” Even the teacher who is supported by those who are taught, is to assist others pecuniarily. Christ and the apostles, who had nothing of their own—for Christ was the poorest of the poor, and the disciples had left all to follow Him—nevertheless distributed to the poor out of their little store. See John 13:29. As the teachers contribute not only the Word but temporal support as well, so those who are taught in the Word should not confine their liberality merely to temporal things. It is a mistake to suppose that ministers of the Gospel never stand in need of spiritual refreshment, or that they can not receive it from the weakest in the flock. No one can ever tell how much the souls of teachers are encouraged by the testimonies of faith and joy in the Lord, which

come from the mouths of those who have heard the Word. It is not simply that the teacher sees that his labor is not in vain; the testimony may have no reference whatever to anything that he has done; but a humble soul's joyful testimony to what God has done for him, will often, through the refreshment it gives the teacher of the Word, be the means of strengthening the souls of hundreds.

Sowing and Reaping

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” A simple statement of fact, that can not be made plainer by any amount of talk. The harvest, which is the end of the world, will reveal what the sowing has been, whether wheat or tares. Verse 8 is so plain and striking a statement that comments only weaken its force. “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.” Hosea 10:12. “He that

trusteth in his own heart is a fool,” and equally foolish is he who trusts in other men, as is seen from the next verse: “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies; because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of mighty men.” “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm,” whether it be his own flesh or that of some other man. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” Jer. 17:5, 7.

Faint Not

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” Eccl. 11:6. This is the thing that is taught in verse 9. We can not tell how much we shall reap, nor from which of the seed that we sow. Some may fall by the wayside, and be snatched away before it has time to take root; and other may fall on stony ground, where it will wither; and still other may fall among thorns, and be choked; but one thing is certain, and

that is that we shall reap. Notice the statement in Ecclesiastes: We do not know whether the morning sowing or the evening sowing will prosper, or whether both shall alike be good. There is no possibility that both can be bad. One or the other alone may prosper, or else both may be good. Isn't that encouragement enough for us not to be weary in well doing? The ground may seem poor, and the season may not be favorable, so that the prospect for a crop may be most unpromising, and we may be tempted to think that all our labor is wasted. Not so; "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15:58.

Make No Difference

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." In this we see that the apostle speaks of temporal help, for it needs no special exhortation to preach the Word to those

who are not of the household of faith; they are the ones to whom it is specially to be preached; but there is a natural tendency—natural, I say, not spiritual—to limit charities to those who are called “deserving.” We hear much about “the worthy poor.” But we are all unworthy of the least of God’s blessings, yet He showers them upon us continually. “If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” Luke 6:33-35. The most of Christ’s ministry on earth was among those who cared nothing for Him personally. In some instances they would not even take the trouble to say, “Thank you,” for the greatest favors bestowed; but that made no difference with Him. He gave just as freely of what He had to give. Let us learn more of Him, that we may “fulfil the law of Christ.”

Seek the Opportunity

Note especially the beginning of the tenth verse. "As we have therefore opportunity," let us do good unto all men. Doing good to others is to be considered a privilege to be enjoyed, and not an irksome duty to be discharged. Men do not speak of disagreeable things as opportunities. No one says that he had an opportunity to injure himself, or that he had an opportunity to lose some money. On the contrary, a man will speak of an opportunity to make some money, or to escape from some threatened danger. It is thus that we are to consider doing good to the needy. But opportunities are always sought for. Men are always on the lookout for an opportunity to get gain. So the apostle teaches us that we should be seeking opportunities to help some one. This Christ did. He "went about doing good." He traveled about the country on foot, a tramp, if you please, but a glorious one. He was searching opportunities to do somebody some good, and He found them. He did good, "for God was with Him." His name

is Immanuel, which means, “God with us.” Now, as He is with us all the days, even to the end of the world, so God is with us, doing good to us, that we also may do good. “We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” To this end, “receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

Chapter 22

The Glory of the Cross

Galatians 6:12-18

We come now to the closing portion of the Epistle to the Galatians. The importance of the Epistle, not less to us than to those to whom it was first addressed, appears in every chapter. The consuming zeal of the apostle Paul in writing it, is seen in the fact that, contrary to his usual custom, he seized the pen and wrote the Epistle with his own hand. Chapter 6:11. As intimated in chapter 4, the apostle suffered from weak eyes, which hindered him much in his work, or would have hindered him but for the power of God resting on him; so that it was necessary for him always to have some one with him, to minister unto him, and to serve as amanuensis. From the second Epistle to the Thessalonians (chap. 2:2) we learn that some took advantage of this fact to write letters to the churches in Paul's name, which troubled the brethren; but in the close of that Epistle (chapter

3:16-18) Paul indicated to them how they might know an epistle that came from him. No matter by whom the body of it was written, he wrote the salutation and the signature with his own hand. So great was the urgency in this case, however, that he wrote the entire Epistle himself.

The lesson for this week, which follows, we quote from the Revision:—

“As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves keep the law; but 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 unto me, and I unto the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.” Gal. 6:12-18.

True and False Circumcision

From the twelfth verse it is evident that the circumcision which was being taught to the brethren, and which Paul stood so stiffly against, as recorded in the second chapter, and warned them against so strongly in chapter 5, was mere outward circumcision, in the flesh. That stood merely for outward righteousness, the works of the flesh. The true circumcision was and is to “worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Phil. 3:3. True circumcision is the keeping of the law, which can be done only as the Spirit of God writes the law in the heart. See Rom. 8:25-29; Heb. 8:10. The man who had the circumcision in the flesh merely, but did not keep the law, was reckoned by the Lord as uncircumcised. Such ones gloried or boasted in the flesh, and denied the cross of Christ, which is the

only thing in the world in which one may rightly glory. The true circumcision is crucifixion with Christ; for that is, as seen from verse 14, a complete cutting off from “this present evil world.”

God Revealed in the Cross

The apostle said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Read now the words of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah:—

“Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.” Jer. 9:23.

Why should not the wise man glory in his wisdom?—Because, so far as it is his own wisdom, it is foolishness. “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.” 1 Cor. 3:19, 20. No man has any wisdom in which to glory, for his own wisdom is foolishness, and wisdom which God gives is something to cause

humility instead of pride.

What about might? “All flesh is grass.” Isa. 40:6. “Every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” Ps. 39:5. “Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.” But “power belongs unto God.” Ps. 62:9, 11.

As to riches, they are “uncertain.” 1 Tim. 6:17. Man “heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.” “Riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” Prov. 23:5. Only in Christ are found unsearchable and abiding riches.

Man therefore has absolutely nothing in which to boast, for what is there left of a man when he has nothing that can be called wealth, no wisdom whatever, and absolutely no strength? Everything that man is or has comes from the Lord. Therefore the Lord says, “Let him that glories glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness,

judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight.” Jer. 9:24.

Now put this text with Gal. 6:4. The same Spirit inspired them both, so that there is no contradiction. One text says that we are to glory only in the knowledge of the Lord; the other says that there is nothing in which to glory save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The conclusion therefore is that in the cross we find the knowledge of God. To know God is eternal life, and there is no life for mankind except through the cross of Christ. So again we see most clearly that all that may be known of God is revealed in the cross. Aside from the cross, there is no knowledge of God.

The Cross Crucifies

The cross in which we are to glory is the cross of Christ, the cross on which Christ suffered crucifixion. To Him it meant crucifixion, and so it does to us, for by it the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world. It meant humiliation and

disgrace, yet nevertheless it is something in which to glory, because the disgrace is only that which the world regards as disgrace. Since the friendship of this world is enmity against God, it follows that the hatred of the world is friendship with God; and the friendship of God is something in which to rejoice.

The cross of Christ, in which alone there is glory, separates from the world. By it the world is to us as tho it did not exist. If the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, then, although in the world, we are no longer of it. The cross means death and disgrace as far as the world is concerned. That which is contrary to the world, and to all the calculations of the world, and which the world despises and turns from, is that in which the child of God is to glory.

The Cross Elevates.—Jesus said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” This He said signifying what death He should die, namely, the death of the cross. He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the cross;

“wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” Phil. 2:8, 9. He descended “first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.” Eph. 4:9, 10. It was through death that He ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. It was the cross that lifted Him up from earth to heaven. Therefore it is that alone that brings us glory, and so it is the only thing in which to glory.

The Cross Creates

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” That is, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any power. The only thing that is of any value is a new creature, or, as indicated in the margin of the Revision, “a new creation.” “If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation;” and it is only through death that we become joined to Him. Rom. 6:3. The cross makes a new creation, so that here again we see a reason for glorying in it; for when

the new creation came from the hand of God in the beginning, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job 38:7.

The Cross Seen in Creation

The preaching of the cross is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. 1 Cor. 1:18. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Thus we see that it is the Gospel. Rom. 1:16. But the power of God is seen only in the things that are made. Rom. 1:20. It is in the things that are made that we learn that which may be known of God, “His eternal power and divinity.” Now since the cross is the power of God, it follows that the cross is revealed in the things that are made. Altho the curse, death, has come upon all the earth, we nevertheless see life all about us. How can that be?—Only because Christ, who can suffer death and yet live, is everywhere present. But wherever Christ is, there is the cross; for Christ is not known to mankind except as the Crucified One.

The Glory

We have seen that the cross is the power of God, and that the power of God is seen in the things that He has made, so that the cross is everywhere visible in creation. It is by the cross that everything is sustained. But for the cross, there would be universal death. Not a man could breathe, not a plant could grow, not a ray of light could shine from heaven, if it were not for the cross. Now “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” Ps. 19:1. They are some of the things that God has made. They show God’s power. They declare the glory of God, for His power is His glory. No pen can describe, and no artist’s brush can depict, the wondrous glory of the heavens; yet that glory is but the glory of the cross of Christ. This follows from the facts already learned, that the power of God is seen in the things that are made, and that the cross is the power of God. The glory of God is His power, for “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward” is seen in the resurrection of Jesus

Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20), and “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom. 6:4). It was for the suffering of death that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor. Heb. 2:9. So we see that all the glory that He has now in heaven, and all the glory the saints will ever share with Him, is nothing more than the glory of the cross. Surely there is enough glory in the cross to satisfy anybody.

The Marks of Christ

“From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” The marks of the cross were upon Paul. He had been crucified with Christ, and he carried the nail-prints. They were branded on his body. They marked him as the bond-servant, the slave, of the Lord Jesus. Let no one, then, interfere with him; he was not the servant of men. He owed allegiance to Christ alone, who had bought him. Let no one seek to get him to serve man or the flesh, because Jesus had branded him with His mark, and he could serve no other. Moreover, let men beware how they

sought to interfere with his liberty in Christ, or how they treated him, for his Master would surely protect His own.

Ah, what glory there is in the cross! All the glory of heaven is in that despised thing. Not in the figure of the cross, but in the cross itself. The world does not reckon it glory, but then it did not know the Son of God, and it does not know the Holy Spirit, because it can not see Him. May God open our eyes to see the glory, so that we may reckon things at their true value. May we consent to be crucified with Christ, that the cross may glorify us. In the cross of Christ there is salvation. In it is the power of God to keep us from falling, for it lifts us up from earth to heaven. In the cross there is the new creation, which God Himself pronounces “very good.” In it is all the glory of the Father, and all the glory of the eternal ages. Therefore God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world.

“In the cross of Christ I glory,

Towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

Therefore,

“Since I, who was undone and lost,
Have pardon through His name and Word,
Forbid it, then, that I should boast,
Save in the cross of Christ, my Lord.”